



# Open your eyes

**A resource for early years and primary education  
exploring blindness around the world**

Stand-alone resource | For use anytime of the year | Curriculum links | Whiteboard support

# Introduction

Sightsavers is a charity that works to eliminate avoidable blindness in over 30 countries in the developing world.

Our vision is of a world where no one is blind from avoidable causes and where people who are blind or visually impaired can participate equally in society.

This resource supports teachers of early years and primary education to explore issues relating to sight from the developing world. It introduces Sightsavers' work and is supportive of classroom activities already conducted by teachers.

By bringing these educational activities into the classroom, you'll be helping to raise awareness of avoidable blindness and to have some fun!



Look out for the **interactive symbol** throughout this resource to link you to Whiteboard and Photo Pack material.



Look out for the **download symbol** throughout this resource to link to worksheets and online materials at [www.sightsavers.ie/primaryschools](http://www.sightsavers.ie/primaryschools)

## This resource explores:

- > our senses; the eye, its different parts and how it works
- > learning to value and appreciate the importance of sight to Irish students
- > teaching students to understand and know about blindness around the world
- > the need to encourage and promote critical thinking, empathy and reflection on issues of blindness.
- > some of the countries where Sightsavers works
- > the challenges faced by people who are blind or visually impaired in developing countries
- > the reasons why more people are at risk of losing their sight and the solutions to saving sight and empowering people with visual impairments.

## Evaluate your learning as you go!

- 🔄 Do a quick quiz to assess the class levels and knowledge. A quick quiz is available on page 9.
- 🔄 The K-W-L chart is a tool for regularly evaluating class progress (see page 9).
- 🔄 Use a project wall to display photos and contributions from the children.
- 🔄 End-of-project evaluations are suggested in this resource.
- 🔄 Continue exploring issues of sight with your class by taking part in the annual Junior Painter Awards.
- 🔄 Have you completed Open Your Eyes with your class? Get free certificates for participants by contacting the education coordinator at [schools@sightsavers.ie](mailto:schools@sightsavers.ie) or by calling (01) 663 7666.

## Linking to the curriculum

Activities may be followed in sequence, adapted to suit class abilities or used as starter activities to introduce students to issues of blindness and visual impairment.

### Junior & Senior Infants, 1st & 2nd Class

<b>English</b>	<b>Oral language</b>   Receptiveness to language; emotional and imaginative development through language; competence and confidence in using language; emotional and imaginative development through language. <b>Reading and writing</b>   Receptiveness to language; confidence and competence in using language; developing cognitive abilities through language; emotional and imaginative development through language.
<b>Geography</b>	<b>Human environments</b>   People and places in other areas. <b>Natural environments</b>   The local natural environment; weather.
<b>Visual Arts</b>	<b>Drawing</b>   Making drawings; looking and responding.
<b>Drama</b>	Drama to explore feelings, knowledge and ideas, leading to understanding   Exploring and making drama; reflecting on drama; co-operating and communicating in making drama.
<b>SPHE</b>	<b>Myself</b>   Self-identity. <b>Myself and others</b>   Myself and my family; my friends and other people; relating to others.

### 3rd & 4th Class, 5th & 6th Class

<b>English</b>	<b>Oral language and writing</b>   emotional and imaginative development through language; developing cognitive abilities through language.
<b>Geography</b>	Trade and development issues; using maps; observing.
<b>Maths</b>	Comparing and ordering; fractions; decimals and percentages; recognising; representing and interpreting data.
<b>SPHE</b>	Self-awareness; relating to others; my friends and other people; communicating; resolving conflict; developing citizenship; national european and wider communities.
<b>Physical Education</b>	Games; creating and playing games; understanding and appreciating games.

# Factsheet Looking at the world

# 80%

of all blindness can be avoided or cured

# 285 million

people are estimated to be visually impaired worldwide

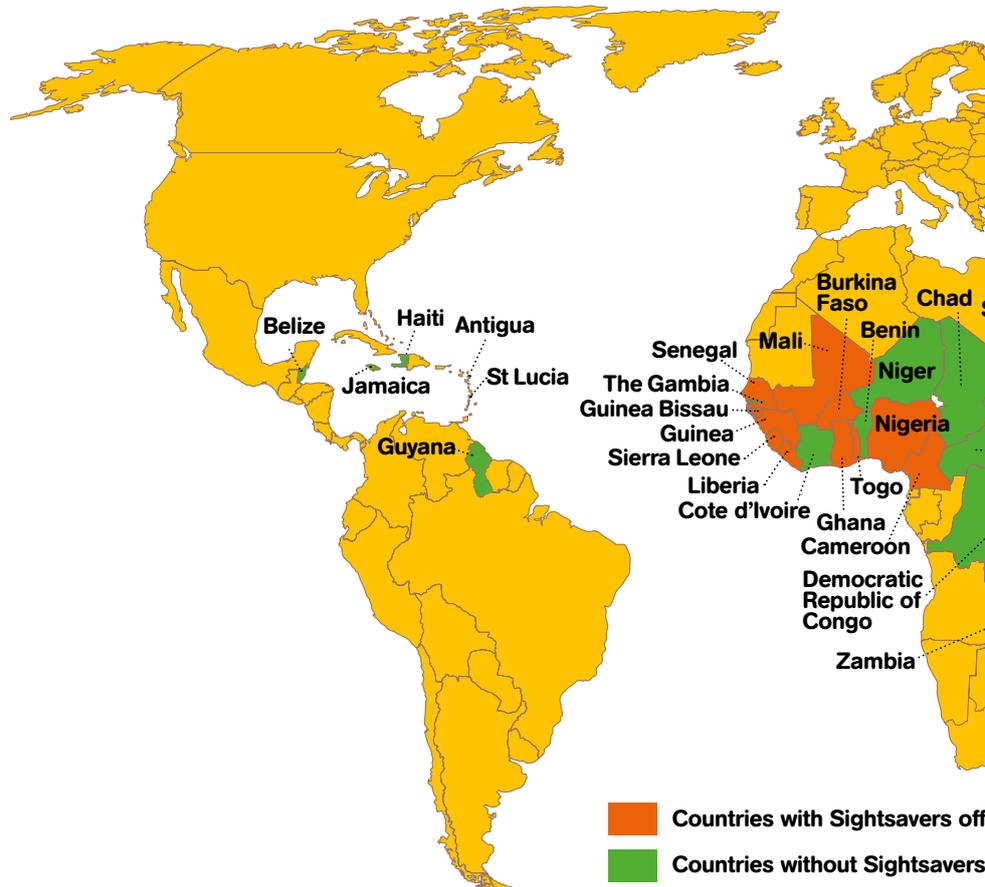
# 39 million

are blind

# 246 million

have low vision

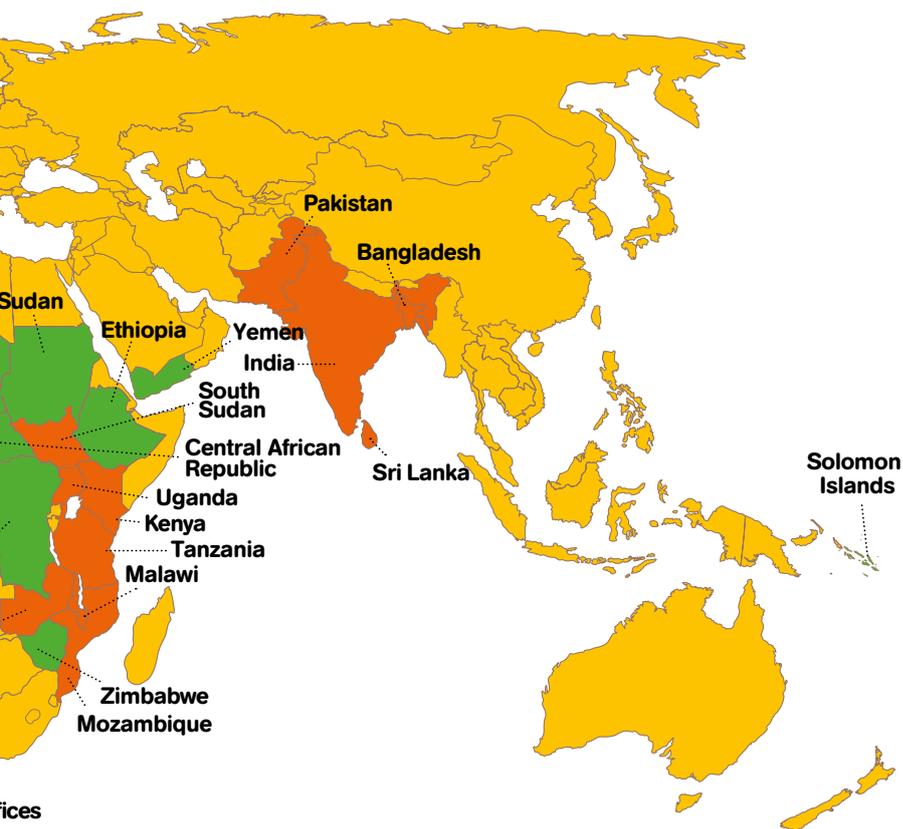
## Where we work



Two thirds of all people who are blind are women. Two of the leading causes of avoidable blindness are cataract and trachoma, they occur more frequently in women.



of the people who are blind live in developing countries



ices  
offices



In many countries across Africa less than one third of those who need access to eye care health services have it. On many occasions this falls to only **1 in 10** people who can get access to eye care health services.

Over **90%** of children who are blind in developing countries do not receive an education.

## Why do we work in these countries?

We work in the countries where people have the greatest need. The reasons people go blind in places like Africa and India aren't always the same reasons that people in Ireland are blind. Living in hot dusty places, with lack of clean water, poor sanitation and hygiene, poor diet and reduced access to eye healthcare can cause people to lose their sight in the countries where we work.

## 153 million people cannot see simply because they don't have glasses

This is due to refractive error caused by the shape of the eye which prevents it from focusing light correctly, resulting in a blurred image. Our partners train eye care workers to identify people with vision problems, to determine what prescription is needed for their glasses or if a person should be referred to an optometrist.



## Activity 1: I do like to be beside the seaside

**Learning objective:** To make students more aware of the five senses.

**You will need:** Worksheets 1 and 2, copies of the word bank, colouring pencils/ crayons/paint, paper for drawing on. **Optional:** tactile materials such as bubble wrap, cotton wool, sandpaper, ribbon, etc.

**Curriculum links:** **English** | oral language, reading and writing. **Geography** | Human environments and natural environments. **Visual arts** | making drawings.

**Time:** 2+ classes.

### Steps:

1. Explain to the students that you will all be doing an activity about being beside the seaside and how we all experience it, using our five different senses. Outline how important our senses are, sight in particular.
2. Invite the students to close their eyes and imagine or remember a time that they were by the seaside. What can they see, smell, feel, hear and taste? Take a few minutes to go through each sense, emphasising what the students can see, making suggestions as appropriate. Give the students enough time to create a picture in their minds of what they experienced or imagined.



3. Hand out one copy of **worksheet 1** to each pupil and ask them to come up with three different words that relate to each of the five senses. In the first instance, these should just be general words – the more descriptive ones come in the next step.

- What sounds do you hear?
- What sensations do you feel?
- What can you smell?
- What can you see around you?
- What can you taste?

These should be general words. The more descriptive are in the next step.



4. Split the class into groups or tables and distribute a copy of **worksheet 2** to each table. Using the words they have from the first activity sheet, invite the students to create three sentences relating to the seaside, including something on site in each one. The sentences they create should also use describing words. Each group should have a 'writer' (to write out the final sentences on the activity page), a 'spokesperson' (to read out the sentences at the end to the class) and a 'chair' (to keep order in the group).
5. The spokesperson from each group should then read out each of the sentences to the class, allowing for any questions to be asked - if necessary.
6. Once the reading is complete, each group can then create a picture using the words and sentences they expressed in the first activity. Alternatively, the students can create an image of the seaside using tactile materials. This could then be displayed in the school as a 'celebration of the senses' for other students to see.



## Activity 2: Bag of tricks

**Learning objective:** To stimulate thinking around how students might identify objects if they were visually impaired – and how they may need help and support from others.

**You will need:** A blindfold, some tissues, items from teachers' notes below and a bag to hold all of the objects.

**Curriculum links:** English | oral language, reading and writing.

**Time:** 1-2 classes.

### Steps:

1. Ask the students to sit in a circle– it is important that everyone can see each other and the bag of tricks. Ask for a volunteer to go first at putting on the blindfold (ensuring to put the tissue between the blindfold and the students eyes – eye hygiene is important!).
2. Invite them to remove one item from the bag and - without looking - guess what it is. If they are struggling to guess what the object is, the other pupils are allowed to give them clues.
3. Once the object has been guessed correctly, the person can remove the blindfold and you should spend a minute explaining the link to blindness (see teachers notes below).
4. Once all of the objects have been removed from the bag, begin a discussion with the class about how it felt to be blindfolded. How easy was it to identify the objects? The teacher can add additional objects or multiples of the ones listed above, to ensure each student gets a turn.



### Teachers' notes:

**Bar of soap** – Talk about trachoma and how in some dry and dusty countries, people may not have access to water to wash properly.

This can cause eye infections which can then lead to blindness. This can be avoided by keeping their hands and faces clean.

**Wooden spoon** – Explore how people who are blind or visually impaired would not be able to see the hob or fire when cooking, putting them at risk.

**Soft toy/rattle** – Ask if they think they would still like the same toys if they were blind?

**Satsuma/food** – How would you know if some food had expired? What senses would you rely on?

**Ruler** – How would you measure things if you were blind? Some rulers have been made with little bumps on them so you can feel the different measurements.

**Book/pen** - How do they think people who are blind read and write? Have they heard of Braille? What is it (a special alphabet made up of raised dots on a page so it can be read by touch)?

**Torch** – Explain that people who have 'cataract' can only see light and dark and no detail at all: if you shine a torch across the room, they might see the light, but won't be able to tell you how many fingers you are holding up.

**Map** – This could be a hand-drawn map of the school. Ask the students how they think they would get around the school if they were blind?

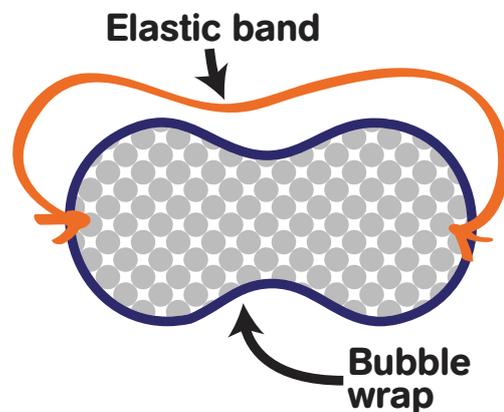
## What is cataract?

Cataract is the main cause of blindness in developing countries. Cataract makes the lens of the eye cloudy and blurs the vision so that you can only see shapes, light and dark, rather than detail. The cloudy lens can be removed and replaced with a plastic lens made especially for people with cataract, with a very simple operation. Cataract is common all over the world, including here in Ireland, but in poorer countries, people do not always have access to the treatment they need.

In order for the students to fully understand the impact a cataract can have, a quick activity can be played out. The teacher can make enough cataract masks for half of the class, following the instructions below. Alternatively, this can be turned into an arts and crafts lesson, where the students make the masks themselves or in pairs.

In their pairs, the students will then take turns wearing the cataract mask guiding each other around the classroom, they can help each other with daily tasks such as washing their hands or tidying their desks. These cataract masks can be used at any point throughout the resource to simulate visual impairment.

- **A blindfold can be made using an old piece of material, an eye mask or scarf for example.**
- **A cataract mask can be made by cutting out a mask shape from some bubble wrap and attaching an elastic band on either end to hold it in place on top of the head.**



### Activity 3: Meet our friend Jesse

**Learning objective:** To create a connection and induce empathy by introducing Jesse to the class.

**You will need:** Pictures 1-7 from the photo pack (downloadable online), photos from the students themselves, wall space for the storyboard, paper to mount the stories on, pens/markers.

**Curriculum links:** **English** | Oral language, reading and writing. **SPHE** | Myself and Myself and others. **Visual art** | Making drawings.

**Time:** 2+ classes.

## Steps:

1. Using photos numbered 'Jesse 1-7' and the 'Meet Jesse' story below, introduce the class to Jesse. This can be done using the photo cards or the slideshow, starting at slide 3. As his story progresses, continue through the photos as indicated in his story. See page opposite for information on cataract.
2. Create a space on the wall in the classroom where Jesse's story can be presented – the storyboard! Each picture can be mounted on a piece of paper with the relevant information from the story written beneath – just a sentence or two (this can be done by the students themselves).
3. To build a link and create empathy between the students and Jesse, ask the students to bring in a picture of themselves, with their family or doing an activity they like, to share with the class. All of the pictures can be displayed together on the same board, with a sentence or two - introducing the student and the picture. It is important that their pictures and stories are hung with at least one of Jesse's pictures. The rest of Jesse's pictures can be displayed beside these, telling the story of his cataract and recovery.
4. Begin a discussion with the students around Jesse's story. What parts of his story are the same as theirs? Who else has an older brother? Who else likes football? Create as many links as possible. These can also be illustrated on the storyboard.

## Case study

### Meet Jesse Antwi Agyeman



Meet Jesse. He is five years old and lives in Koforidua in the eastern region of Ghana, West Africa with his parents – Hannah and Daniel, and his brother Kelvin who is eight years old. Jesse loves to draw and play football with his friends. He has been in school for one year. Hannah, Jesse's mother, noticed he was having trouble reading and kept rubbing on his eye. She could



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see little white marks on it, so took him to the hospital. The doctor said Jesse had cataract. Although his family were worried about this, they knew Jesse could have an operation to remove the cataract. Jesse had to have some tests on his eye before the operation.

Once Jesse had his operation, his parents were relieved and happy. The bandage was removed from his eye for the nurse to check if the operation was successful. It was! They gave him a pair of dark sunglasses to protect his eye from the sun and dust. He had to put eye drops in his eye to help it heal. It stung, but Jesse was brave because he knew the drops were helping his eyes. Jesse's dad, Daniel, says that 'For us the operation has been a good thing. We know Jesse will learn better if he can see all of the time. We hope Jesse will now work hard in school so he can have a good job when he grows up'.



## Activity 4: The market place

**Learning objective:** To experience what it is like to be visually impaired while carrying out daily tasks through drama and role play.

**You will need:** Blindfolds, cataract masks, props for the role play.

**Curriculum links:** **Drama** | Drama to explore feelings, knowledge and ideas, leading to understanding | Exploring and making drama; reflecting on drama; co-operating and communicating in making drama.

**Time:** 2 classes.

**Class organisation:** The room will need to be organised to suit the role play of choice.

### Steps:

1. The role play can be carried out in a number of ways. The classroom is turned into a market place - selling various items ranging from food and clothes to general items. Some of the students will be 'market stall owners' and some will be 'customers'.
2. The students who are the 'market stall owners' can set up their stalls with the goods they are selling. The students who are customers should wait outside the classroom while this is being set up.
3. The 'customers' should be given a shopping list of things to collect from the 'marketplace', however, they will also be either blindfolded entirely, or using their cataract mask while carrying out their shopping. How will they get the appropriate items? How will they manage? That is for the class to decide during the role play. Will they help each other? Will they pair up? Will they try to dupe them because they can't see? This is all part of the role play!
4. The role play can be set up in any scenario that involves the students interacting - but it is key that some are blind folded, or wearing their cataract mask. A morning or afternoon in the classroom could be spent where half of the class wears the cataract mask or blindfold and has a 'buddy' who will help them out, switching roles halfway.
5. The important element of this activity is the discussion held afterwards. Was it difficult being temporarily visually impaired? If so, why? How did it feel? And so on - it is important to reiterate at this point that people with cataract can be helped, by having the operation that Jesse had (refer back to his storyboard). However, for some, blindness is permanent. Although this can be difficult for people, it is important to emphasise that blind people can live independent lives. They just might need some extra support - the same way some students did in the market place.

# 3rd to 6th class activities

We recommend adapting earlier activities, including the ‘bag of tricks’ activity or role play activity in order to build empathy and understanding as part of the primary education activities. These activities also have strong links to the science syllabus.

## K-W-L chart – a tool for evaluating class progress

The K-W-L chart, tracks what a student knows (K), wants to know (W), and has learned (L) about a topic in this case blindness. Ask students to first think about what they know about blindness (for

example what organ it affects). Students should then direct their thinking toward the questions they have about blindness. These questions are recorded in the second column. Then, as students are guided through the activities and case studies, they should gather information in the third column, showing what was learned.

### Sample K-W-L chart

<b>K</b> What do we know?	<b>W</b> What do we want to know?	<b>L</b> What have we learned?
Blindness means a person cannot see	How can people who are blind read and write?	Our sight is very valuable
Blindness affects the eyes	What causes blindness?	Many people who are blind don't need to be
Sight is one of the five senses	How can people be helped?	Some blindness cannot be cured but people who are blind can still live independent lives

**Questions to establish a baseline of knowledge** – these questions can be asked again after working through a lesson to demonstrate what, if any, is the level of improved understanding.

Tick the box to answer these questions	True	False
Blindness can never be cured	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Children who are blind cannot read or write	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Many of the people who are blind in developing countries do not have to be	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



## Activity 5: A common childhood

**Learning objective:** Building empathy, knowledge and understanding of children outside of Ireland.



**You will need:** A blindfold, some tissues, a torch, a satsuma, a soft toy, a bar/bottle of soap, a wooden spoon, a ruler, a pen, a book, a map, something that makes noise, like a rattle, and a bag to hold all of the objects.

**Curriculum links:** **Oral language and writing** | emotional, developing cognitive abilities through language; **SPHE** | self-awareness, relating to others, my friends and other people, national European and wider communities.

**Time:** 2 classes.

**Class organisation:** Group work.

### Steps:

Using the following questions as a guide, ask the pupils to think about what things they have in common with other pupils in their class. They can either write down the top ten things that they have in common, or just use the questions as a basis for discussion in groups or within the class as a whole.

- > Do you have a favourite subject?
- > Do you go to school with your friends?
- > Do you enjoy sport?
- > Do you enjoy music?
- > Do you go to school near where you live?
- > What games do you like playing with friends?
- > What do you want to be when you grow up?

Once you have discussed their answers to these questions, ask them to think about

what they have in common with children who live in countries like India or a country in Africa. Do they think that children in these countries enjoy the same things that they do? Would these things be different if these children were blind?

### Meeting Sruthika – identifying with her as a child

Sruthika is four years old. She is blind but goes to a mainstream nursery school in Punnakkaria (Tamil Nadu state, India) with her sighted friends. Her favourite lesson at school is singing songs, and she likes doing actions to songs. She enjoys playing bat and ball with her best friend Vishnau. Sruthika's grandmother Sukumari says 'Sruthika identifies people by the sound of their steps.'

Telling the pupils about Sruthika and what makes her happy can help to illustrate to the class that children all over the world share similar desires and aspirations, regardless of where they live, and whether they are blind or sighted.

You can do this activity using images of Frances or Bahati in the photo pack – you need to cut out four images in total.

Stick your chosen four images onto the centre of a piece of A4 paper.

- > Separate the pupils into four groups.
- > Give each group one copy of the A4 paper you have prepared.
- > Read the short extracts about Frances and Bahati out loud to the class.
- > Ask the groups to make a list of things they think they have in common with the person in the picture (either Frances or Bahati) from what they can see in the picture as well as what they learnt from the extracts. They can write down everything they have in common with the two teenagers on the paper around the picture.

## Meeting Frances

My name is Frances Kidenya and I live in Tanzania. I am 13 years old. I have severe low vision and read and write using Braille. I sit in class with other children who can see. My favourite lesson is maths and my favourite break time activities include running and playing football. People say I am 'fearless on the football pitch'! I can run confidently with the ball and am helped by my team mate's calls and a bell in the ball. My best friend is Musa Kiswaga – we have been friends since I joined the school and we do everything together.



© Suzanne Porter/Sightsavers



© Fabienne Fosseze/Sightsavers

## Meeting Bahati

My name is Bahati Kamage and I am 13 years old. I live in a village called Chagalawe in Tanzania and have been blind for six years. This is a picture of me and my two friends Adelina and Gloria. (I'm in the middle, Adelina is on the left and Gloria is on the right). I would like to be a professor. I like school, and like to read using Braille. I use Braille in all my lessons and am currently learning English, Maths, Science, Swahili, Home Economics, PE and netball. Adelina has low vision and wants to be a nurse or a health worker when she grows up. Bahati says:

"She helps me by guiding me if I want to go somewhere. Gloria helps me by reading for me." When someone asked Gloria recently if she thinks of me as being blind, she said, "She's just my friend and that's it."



© Suzanne Porter/Sightsavers



## Activity 6: Mapping by numbers

**Learning objective:** Students will explore a series of numbers related to blindness in Ireland and developing countries and also use maps to locate countries and calculate the distance between them and us.

**You will need:** Access to computers for students; a large world map; sticky tape.

**Curriculum links:** **Geography** | trade and development issues, using maps, observing; **Maths** | comparing and ordering, fractions, decimals and percentages, recognising, representing and interpreting data.

**Time:** 1 class period.

**Class organisation:** Computer lab needed.

### Steps:

Ask the students to imagine that the entire population of the world – all 7 billion of us – are represented in their classroom by them. Ask them to stand up and rearrange themselves according to the statistics you read out.

**Over a billion people – around 15 percent of the world's population – live with some form of disability – 4 students\***

**90 percent of visually impaired people live in low – and middle-income countries – 27 students**

**80 percent of all visual impairment is avoidable (can be prevented or cured) – 24 students**

**98 percent of children who are blind in developing countries do not go to school – 29 students**

**An estimated 30 per cent of the world's street children live with disabilities – 9 students**

**Approximately three-quarters of the world's blind children live in the poorest regions of Africa and Asia – 22 students**

**Not all children that have a disability are supported in going to school. The gap between children with a disability and abled children ranges from 10 percent in India to 60 percent in Indonesia – 3 students and 18 students respectively**

**About 220,000 people in Ireland are either blind or have limited vision and the number is increasing – 2 students**

Ask the students if any of the figures surprised them. Ask them to draft the three most important questions they would want answered about these statements. Write these questions up in large font and leave them on display.

\*Suggested number of students are based on a classroom average of 30.

**Note:** remind students of their study of The Great Famine in Ireland and the experience of people who are hungry and do not have enough to eat; do not have access to clean water, leaving them at risk of developing trachoma; or how their bodies change and health weakens as a result of not having enough to eat; how being hungry can cause problems in the body – both short term but also long term problems. When looking at poorer countries today remember – Ireland used to be like that, and many developed countries today have similar experiences in the past!

### Map activity:

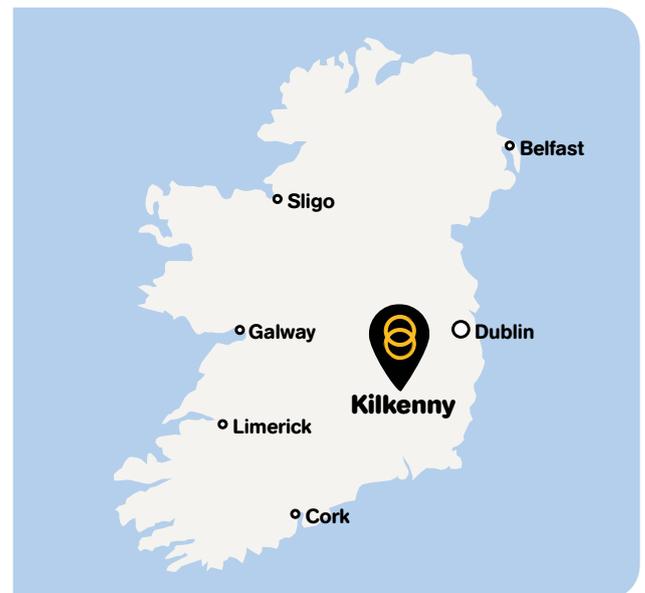
Display the map of the world showing the countries where Sightsavers works, which is available in Slide 2 of the PowerPoint presentation. Engage students with the map. Ask if they know where Ireland and Africa are and if they know anything about the countries that are highlighted. Explain that most of the people in the world who are blind live in the highlighted countries. In these countries, conditions such as lack of clean water, poor nutrition and hygiene mean that diseases can spread that cause blindness. There are fewer eye doctors and reduced access to clinics and eye health care.

In groups of three get students to pick one of the children from the photos included in the photopack and, using google maps:

- > Find the location of the town/city where that person is from
- > Calculate the distance from that town to your school. See: [www.sightsavers.ie/primaryschools](http://www.sightsavers.ie/primaryschools)

**Teacher:** reveal on Google maps all of the locations of the people mentioned in the case studies. Invite students to do some research on that country in the form of a short story.

**Optional activity:** divide the class into two teams. Cut out the names of countries where blindness in the developing world is located and make available to both teams, begin a relay race to pin a country on a map on the wall. Each student lines up and goes one at a time. Team mates may assist from the line. Once successful, the next person is tagged in to locate the next country on the map. First team to locate all countries on the map wins.





## Activity 7: Sports challenge

**Learning objective:** Students will explore and invent games.



**You will need:** Blindfolds, tennis balls etc., photo cards or PowerPoint slides.

**Curriculum links:** P.E. | Games; creating and playing games; understanding and appreciating games.

**Time:** 2 class periods.

**Class organisation:** Going outdoors is preferable.

### Steps:

If there were children who were blind in your school, what games would the pupils be able to play together? Can the pupils think of a new game that they could play together and try it out with a blindfold on?

### What other sports can children who are blind play?

The following images show some young people taking part in the 'Kenyan Blind Games'. Do the photos surprise some pupils who may previously have thought that these games would be impossible for a child who is blind to play?



All photos © Magali Delporte/Sightsavers

Before reading out the case study invite students, in groups to discuss how the people in the photos may be thinking or feeling. Use post-it notes to record speech bubbles.

## Case study

### Vipin loves cricket

My name is Vipin and I am 11 years old. I live with my mother Leena, father Yasudhas, and my brother Ajin who is nine-years-old, in a place called Melpalai village in India.

My parents suspect I was probably born blind, but didn't realise I was blind until I banged my head against the wall when I was a year old. My mother says: "He has never been treated differently to his brother. He can walk 100 metres around the house and can even climb trees!". I have been going to school since I was six. For two years there was a teacher looking after my special needs at school, and taught me Braille. I am in fourth class with Ajin at Kunnathukal Govt Upper Primary School. I use a Braille slate, and can read and write Braille. I do very well in my studies and I am much better than Ajin who me helps out!

I like to play cricket with my brother and the neighbourhood children (I am the bowler). I have been friends



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with Ajin for the past five years since standard one (now in standard five). I like playing carom board where I can hear the sounds of the game. We play as a pair against other people: "Together we can defeat the entire world."

After school I like to play at home, play cricket, hide and seek, and then do my homework. We talk about what we learned in school together and help each other understand what we learned. If I forget a word I just ask Ajin to tell me, or the meaning of a word. I like reciting poems and Ajin likes listening to me recite them. Ajin takes me to the bathroom and washes my plates. He does things a brother would do. He's a friend who doubles as a kind of brother.

### Extended activity:

Look at the video Blind soccer in Brazil at

[www.nytimes.com/video/sports/soccer/10000002932091/blind-soccer-in-brazil.html](http://www.nytimes.com/video/sports/soccer/10000002932091/blind-soccer-in-brazil.html)



## Activity 8: Education for children with disabilities

### What are the obstructions to education?

There are 80 million children in developing countries missing out on school and approximately a third of these children have disabilities. Sightsavers is a member of a coalition of organisations working together to deliver the education Millennium Development Goal, which seeks to achieve universal primary education for all children. Barriers to education in developing countries include:

- > Not enough trained teachers, partly because other sectors pay more than teaching
- > Teaching is not as highly respected a job as other jobs in some countries. Teachers sometimes take a second job so that they can earn more money
- > Teacher training colleges are being closed - impacting on the number of teachers being trained and working in education
- > Other barriers include poorly equipped classrooms, limited access to special needs materials and the fact that children sometimes need to help support the family income

**Learning objective:** To reflect on why so many children, specifically children with disabilities, are out of school in poor countries. Children will learn what the barriers to education are, as well as have time to empathise with the children that are featured. They will also learn how Sightsavers helps children who are blind so that they can attend school.

**Note:** Please bear in mind that there is no right answer in this activity – the aim is to encourage critical thinking whilst raising awareness of how many children are missing out on school, and how children around the world can take action to address this.

**You will need:** Photocopy statements on Worksheet 3 so that you have two copies. Cut out each statement so that you have four sets of the statements.

**Curriculum links:** **SPHE** | Self-awareness, Relating to Others, **English** | Oral language and writing - emotional and imaginative development through language, developing cognitive abilities through language.

**Time:** 2 classes.

**Classroom organisation:** Separate pupils into four groups.

### Procedure

#### Children not in school

Read out the extract about Difasi and run through the following with the class to introduce the issues involved. Children who are blind miss out on school for a number of reasons including:

- > Parents worry they will have an accident.
- > Specialist support is not available (e.g. specialist teachers).
- > Braille materials are not available.

- > Teachers do not have time to give children who are blind special attention because class sizes are very large.

- > Parents cannot afford to send their children to school (i.e., cost of books, uniform, travel, lunch, fees to the school, etc.).

## Case study

### Difasi, from Uganda



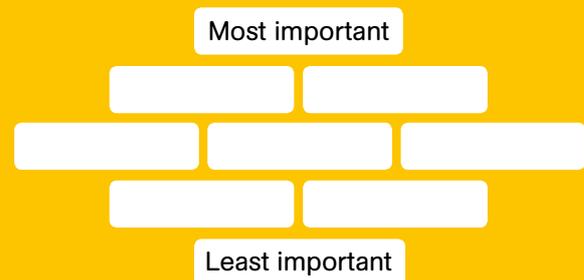
My name is Difasi and I live with my six brothers and sisters in a village in South East Uganda. (Uganda is a country in East Africa next to Kenya.) I am 9 years old and have been blind all my life. I like playing football and playing hide and seek and running. I used to really enjoy going to school but have had to drop out because I had to support my family when the crops on our farm died. I have always had very low vision. Once my mother took me to try and get medical help in a nearby town, but there was no doctor so we didn't go back. Sometimes I find it boring not being in school and I get a bit lonely. I wish I could go to school and be with my friends. If I went to school I could be independent and look after myself. My dream for the future is to ride a motorcycle and become a doctor.



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More stories about the Global Campaign for Education can be found at [www.sendmyfriend.org](http://www.sendmyfriend.org) and select 'Real Life Stories'.

- > Give each class a full set of statements so that each group has nine different statements
- > Ask the groups to rank the statements in order of importance to create a diamond shape like the image below so that the most important statement is at the top and the least important statement is at the bottom. There should be some discussion within the group as to which statements should go where
- > Once all the statements are in place in every group ask the groups to view other groups diamonds
- > If there are differences between one group and another, ask the groups to justify why they ordered statements differently.



Download worksheet online at [www.sightsavers.ie/primaryschools](http://www.sightsavers.ie/primaryschools)



## Activity 9: Seeing the lives of others Poster Project

**Learning objective:** To explore the lives of prominent social activists who have overcome the challenges of being blind or having a visual disability.

**You will need:** Access to the internet, library time (school library or local library).

**Curriculum links:** **SPHE** | Relating to Others, Communicating, Resolving Conflict, Developing Citizenship. **English** | Oral language and writing – emotional and imaginative development through language, developing cognitive abilities through language.

**Time:** 2-3 class periods.

**Classroom organisation:** Teams of 2 or 3 students to prepare a project poster on a person that has had a visual disability.

### Steps:

Ask the class about their experience and learning about people who are blind or have a visual impairment. Explain to the class that while there are many people who are blind in the world, with the right assistance and tools they can achieve great things. Providing ways to include people in society who may be blind or have a visual impairment is called social inclusion.

Prepare a project poster on one of the following people, exploring: **1)** Three background info facts. **2)** Three challenges they faced in their lifetime. **3)** How they overcame those challenges? **4)** What were their main achievements? **5)** What surprised you and why (pick at least one fact)?

**Helen Keller** | USA | deaf and blind writer and activist

**Amadou and Miriam** | Mali | blind musician duo, are also married

**Harriet Tubman** | USA | former African American slave turned activist

**Aldous Huxley** | England | writer

**Tofiri Kibuuka** | Uganda-Norway | athlete, adventurer and first African to compete in Winter Paralympics Games

**Stevie Wonder** | USA musician and music producer

**Sabriye Tenberken** | Germany | social worker and founder of Braille without Borders

**Tilly Aston** | Australia | blind writer, teacher and founder of Victorian Association of Braille Writers

**Sean O'Casey** | Ireland | playwright who lived in a slum in Dublin when at the time Dublin slums were seen as the worst in Europe

**Chen Guangcheng** | China | civil rights activist and self-taught lawyer

Instruct students to use the local library, the internet, magazines and photos to prepare your project poster. Allocate sufficient class period time for students to research and collate posters.

Allow for a class period for student teams to present posters back to the rest of the class and share what they have learned. Place posters on class project wall.

### **Evaluation activity:**

Get the class to write out a Charter of 10 Things That We Have Learned based on all of the project work to date. This can be done as a whole class. You may organise this into things I learned about me; things I learned about people with a visual disability and; things we should all be doing in the world.

Use the project wall to point to learning from the project; invite students to

sign the Learning Charter; share it with others in the school and beyond in the community (parents, local community organisations, etc.).

### **Peer education extension activity:**

Why not show others in your school what you have learned? Invite other students from school to see your project wall and ask students to take turns in presenting what they researched, what it is like looking at the lives of children and adults with a visual disability, and the role of education and 'learning aids' to support those with a visual disability.

### **Creative arts project activity:**

Children prepare a storybook using objects from their own lives and sticking them to an A4 copybook. Objects can include things collected outdoors and from in the home.

## **Now that you've completed *Open Your Eyes* – tell us about it!**

1. Contact our schools coordinator to order free certificates for your class on completion of your project
2. Take pictures of your action projects and posters and share them with us to be featured on our website
3. Enter Sightsavers' Junior Painter Awards open for primary school children. Every year Sightsavers asks children to create a painting under a sight-related theme.
4. Invite a Sightsavers speaker to visit your school to present your work and hear more about us



### **For all of this and more contact our schools coordinator:**

**schools@sightsavers.ie** or call **01 663 7666**

**Visit:** [www.sightsavers.ie/primaryschools](http://www.sightsavers.ie/primaryschools)

**Follow us:** [www.facebook.ie/sightsaversireland](https://www.facebook.ie/sightsaversireland)

**Follow us on Twitter:** @SightsaversIE

Visit Sightsavers Ireland on **Youtube**

### **We value your feedback (subhead)**

We have added a brief survey on line, which will help us evaluate and improve our education resources. We would greatly appreciate your feedback.

## What's inside this pack?

1. A section for Junior infants to 2nd class \*
2. A section for 3rd class to 6th class, with each section containing the following:
  - Broad links to the primary curriculum
  - Activities with numeracy and literacy goals
  - A range of stories of the lives of children from across the world
  - Participative and active learning methods
  - 28 photo cards to support visual learning

\* We encourage teachers to look at both sections and adapt activities for their class ability. Refer to the webpage [www.sightsavers.ie/primaryschools](http://www.sightsavers.ie/primaryschools) to access PowerPoint presentations, find photo pack for print or use on whiteboard, download activity sheets and more!

## Why learn about avoidable blindness?

### This resource has been written to:

1. explore visual impairment around the world, particularly in developing countries
2. to build empathy, understanding and awareness on issues of sight and blindness based on people with whom Sightsavers has worked
3. to encourage participative methods and experiential learning in the classroom



Sightsavers

**Working in developing countries to combat avoidable blindness and promote equal opportunities for people with disabilities.**



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## Credits

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