

Focus

Your magazine from  Sightsavers **Autumn 2019**

Washing trachoma away

You're supporting vital hygiene and sanitation projects to free people from this terrible disease by 2025

The end is in sight

Welcome and thank you

You're saving sight and upholding disability rights

These are really exciting times. We're getting closer to eliminating trachoma and we're making huge strides in supporting the rights of people with disabilities. We couldn't do it without you and I hope you're proud of what you're helping us achieve!

Trachoma thrives in places where there's poor sanitation and lack of access to clean water. To truly beat this painful, blinding disease we need to educate people about the importance of good hygiene, and one of the ways we're helping to do this is by supporting school health clubs. As you'll see on page 4, children like Charles are being inspired to wash their hands and faces and take what they've learned back home. Then, on page 6, meet the amazing Aliyu A-Umar, whose fun approach has done wonders in getting the good hygiene message across.

Some of you have been loyal sight-savers for many years, and may even remember when we were called the Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind. Our founders, Sir John and Lady Jean Wilson, had a vision to ensure that people with disabilities could enjoy the same rights as everyone else. On page 8 you can read about an incredible, pioneering feat that changed misconceptions about blindness across the world, and see why today, with your brilliant support, our commitment to equality is stronger than ever.



My very best wishes,

Becki Jupp

Becki Jupp
Global Director of Fundraising

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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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Thanks for your support!

Positive prevention

You're helping us inspire good hygiene in Kenya's young people, as part of our fight to eliminate trachoma by 2025

A beaming Charles proudly shows the 'tippy-tap' he made to provide his family with running water. It consists of an old water container attached by string to a stick on the ground. To make the water flow, you simply stand on the stick, which tugs the rope and tips the tap. Simple yet effective.

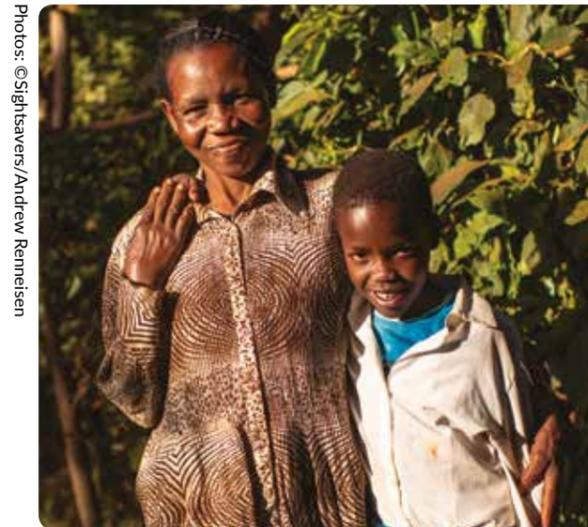
Twelve-year-old Charles lives in Meru county, in the foothills of Mount Kenya. He's the chairperson of his school's health club, set up through the WASH programme that's vital to the success of our End is in Sight campaign. Every Thursday, Charles and his fellow health club members learn about the importance of good hygiene in preventing trachoma and other diseases from spreading.

"I teach them and then we do it practically," explains health club teacher Amm Mirungu. "We wash, clean the toilets, dig the compost pit, we keep the compound clean."

Before the health club started, trachoma was rife in Meru. Flies were everywhere, children complained of health issues and were missing school. Thankfully, these problems are reducing. "Since starting the club and realising washing their hands and faces is important, these problems are diminishing and they are healthy now," says Amm.

As a health club champion, Charles shares what he's learned with other students at the school and with his friends and family at home. Raising awareness like this is extremely

important because trachoma spreads so easily in close communities. The practical measures are important too. As well as making the tippy tap, Charles has helped to improve his family's pit latrine. His grandmother Lucy is very proud of him.



Photos: ©Sightsavers/Andrew Remnisen

"Charles started teaching us about hygiene last year," says Lucy. "Before this, we had a basic pit latrine but no tap. Charles has shown us how to improvise to get running water."

Lucy is trachoma-free, but Charles's late great-grandmother suffered from the agonising disease for many years. Thankfully, she eventually received surgery to correct her in-turned eyelids and stop her eyelashes from scraping painfully at her eyes.

"Her eyes were made healthy," Charles exclaims. "She was able to fetch firewood again. When she was healthy, I was very happy - happy as a king!"

"Charles has done really well. All the things he's learned at school, he's come home and put into practice. Because of this, trachoma will reduce"

Lucy, Charles's grandmother

The end is in sight

Hygiene heroes

The Super School of 5 programme promotes the importance of regular hand and face washing

As part of the 21-day programme, schoolchildren follow the adventures of five cool and clean superheroes battling to beat the evil baddie Nogood, who loves germs. The superhero characters each represent five key points in the day when the children need to wash their hands and faces: **Biff** (before breakfast), **Bam** (at lunchtime), **Pow** (at dinnertime) **Hairyback** (after using the toilet) and **Sparkle** (during bathing).



The programme is full of activities, games, songs and dances to reinforce the message. For example, the children are encouraged to design murals and make up their own songs to enter fun competitions between neighbouring schools. Research shows that 21 days is the optimum time needed for children to change their behaviour so it becomes a habit, and we're seeing really positive results. Trachoma rates in Kenya have dropped significantly and the programme has also been making a difference in Ethiopia, Zambia and Nigeria.

Transforming lives

See how crucial work you're supporting is helping Charles, Lucy and thousands of people in Kenya. Watch our inspiring video now at: sightsavers.org/focus





Photos: ©Sightsavers/Graeme Robertson

Meet the dancing surgeon

As a trachoma surgeon, Aliyu A-Umar had an inspiring way of making people feel at ease about eye care

What looks like a frantic rugby scrum suddenly breaks out among a large crowd of children, and a huge dust cloud appears around them. But this isn't a fight; it's a mad scramble for the big bowl of ripe mangoes that Aliyu is carrying.

Once the fruit is shared out, Aliyu sings and dances his way through the village, beating a rhythm on the empty mango bowl. As the captivated children follow behind, Aliyu leads them into a shaded clearing and dons his magnifying glasses. This is an eye care screening session, cleverly disguised as a party!

Winning hearts and minds

The scene we've just described is from when Aliyu was head ophthalmic nurse and lead trachoma surgeon for Sokoto state, Nigeria. Aliyu has worked in eye care for over 23 years, and has been part of the Sightsavers programme for at least 12 of those. Now he's a Sightsavers trachoma project officer, bringing his wealth of experience and charming personality to the role.

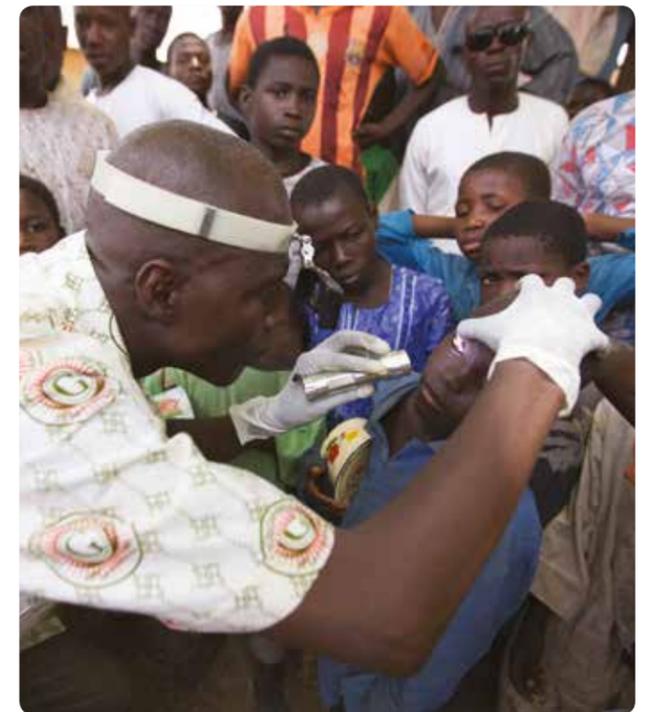
As well as performing sight-saving surgery, Aliyu worked hard to overcome people's lack of awareness about trachoma's root cause – poor hygiene. Every Sunday, he selflessly spent his

free time going from village to village, spreading the word about the eye care services available at local health facilities and hospitals. People love Aliyu, and through his friendly, encouraging approach he's broken down barriers and gained their trust. We're thrilled to have Aliyu on board, and know that he'll continue to play a huge part in helping to eliminate trachoma.

"We have to do a lot to change the attitudes of people," says Aliyu. "Once there is good sanitation and hygiene there will be a reduction. Everybody will come together to eliminate trachoma."

378,951

In 2018 alone you helped support 378,951 trachoma treatments and 1,264 trichiasis surgeries in Sokoto state



Reaching the unreachable

When we first met them, Sililo, Maimbolwa and Inutu were suffering from the pain and misery of trachoma. But just look at them now!



Sililo, Maimbolwa (pictured) and their sister Inutu live in Mongu, Zambia. With the help of amazing sight-savers like you, we were able to find and treat them and many other families living in this remote, hard-to-reach region. The transformation is incredible.

The children used to stay indoors to stop the harsh sun and wind from hurting their

sore eyes. Now they run around the village playing with their friends. All three can go to school, and the whole family regularly wash their hands and faces to prevent the disease from returning. Life is looking brighter and it's all thanks to you!



©Sightsavers/Jason J Mulikita

Making every person count

Together we've upheld the rights of people with disabilities from the start. With your ongoing help we'll continue

Conquering stigma

Fifty years ago, on 20 February 1969, seven young men with visual impairments reached the top of Mount Kilimanjaro, Africa's highest mountain. They showed the world that people with disabilities can achieve extraordinary things, and helped combat the widely held negative beliefs that prevented so many from getting jobs and going to school.

This ground-breaking, misconception-shattering expedition was organised by Sir John and Lady Jean Wilson, who founded the Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind (Sightsavers' former name). It shows that promoting equal opportunities for people with disabilities has been integral to our work from the very beginning. Today, it remains at the core of everything we do.

The trekkers came from Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya. After completing two weeks of hard training, they began the climb on

Monday 17 February 1969. Three days later, despite suffering altitude sickness, sunburn and freezing temperatures, all but one made it to the top. As they struggled, exhausted, to Kilimanjaro's summit, one of the guides shouted into the walkie-talkie: "This is a moment of glory!" His words, picked up by radio, were the first broadcast made from the peak of the mountain.

News of this extraordinary achievement spread far and wide. Queen Elizabeth sent a warm message of support from London and the story made headline news around the world. The young men received a hero's welcome in their home towns, and three pairs of their worn-out boots are still displayed in the Ugandan National Museum.



Blind men conquer Kilimanjaro
MR. GEORGE SALISBURY, a member of the teaching staff of the Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind, African team of blind African climbers who yesterday reached the summit of Kilimanjaro, 19,341ft — the highest mountain in Africa.
The team — two Kenyans, two Tanzanians and three Ugandans — had the scene from the summit described to them by sighted guides. An aircraft of East African Airways circled and dipped its wings in salute. For the last seven hours of the ascent, the climbers had to battle against biting winds and sub-zero temperatures. In a radio message from the summit they said they would like Lord Hunt to take them up Mt. Everest.
The party spent an hour at the peak before descending to camp before spending the night at 16,500ft to spend the night at the Oarward Bound School hill.

We have met fear and, though we still cannot see, we have walked through the gardens of the gods and they were not angry”

25-year-old trekker Andikati, from Kenya

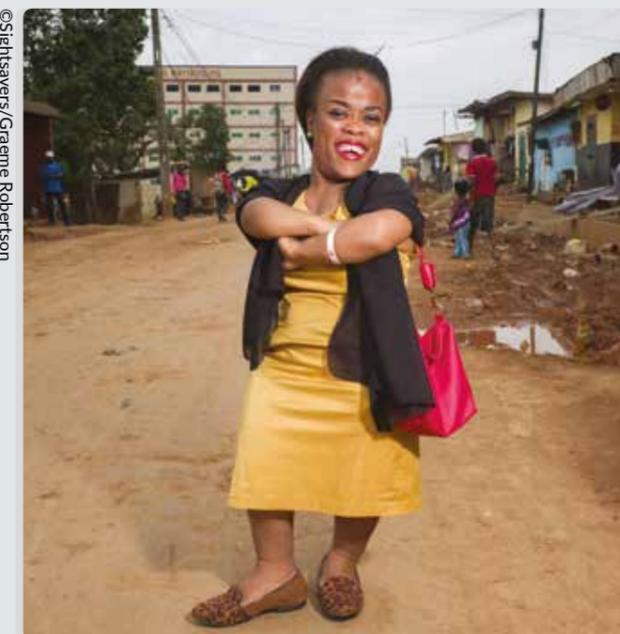
Supporting disability rights

In Cameroon, we're ensuring that people with disabilities can vote and engage with politics

Despite laws in Cameroon that protect the rights of people with disabilities, including the right to vote, many still face barriers such as inaccessible polling stations and a lack of ballot papers written in braille. With your support, we're working hard to help change things for people like Nanny Powers and Adieme Serges Floreal.

Nanny has restricted growth and didn't think she had the right to vote. Now she sees it as absolutely essential, and has founded Cameroon's National Association of Persons with Short Stature – a disability organisation that campaigns for the rights of others like her.

“The first time I tried to vote, the voting box was too high for me to reach!” says Nanny. “I didn't know my rights, but a woman came and said to me: ‘You have the right to vote.’ It was so amazing. I realised that my voice counted equally.”



Adieme is an assistant lecturer at the Training Teacher's High School in central Cameroon, yet his blindness means he's never been able to vote. He was allocated a polling station too far from his home but, when he went to register at one closer by, he was turned away. Thankfully, Adieme will get to vote for the first time with the help of local disabled people's organisations and Sandra, one of our social inclusion programme officers.

Driving positive change

Since 2011, with support from Irish Aid, Sightsavers has worked with Cameroon's official election body and other organisations to help people with disabilities engage with the country's democratic process. We're making progress. The number of disabled people registering to vote in Cameroon has risen from around 8,000 in 2011 to around 45,000 in 2018.

Classroom eye care

You're enabling teachers like Mr Aahiswar to screen students across India for eye conditions

Photos: ©Sightsavers/Tim Fransham



Mr Aahiswar is head teacher at a middle school in Vidisha, India. With your support, we've helped train him and his fellow teachers to screen their pupils for eye conditions.

Once a year, the teachers invite an ophthalmologist into the school to check prescriptions and distribute glasses. These classroom eye tests are crucial. Vision impairments in children can seriously affect their ability to learn. Left undetected and untreated, some conditions can even lead to blindness.

Previously, when Mr Aahiswar suspected a child had vision problems he'd suggest they go and get their eyes checked at a hospital. But the costs of getting there are beyond the reach of many families. Now Mr Aahiswar does the checking himself with the help of a screening chart. If a child needs further treatment, he's able to refer them to hospital and their travel costs are covered by Sightsavers.

"I can do the primary screening, and now I can contact the programme officers to come and get the eye check-up done for the children," Mr Aahiswar explains. "Sightsavers and the hospital are both very proactive and because of this programme the children are benefiting."

One of those children is 13-year-old Roshani. After having her eyes screened at the school, Roshani was found to be short-sighted and was prescribed glasses. She's delighted to have them.

"I will be able to see the small letters on the screening charts!" Roshani exclaims.



2,696,788

So far across India our school eye camp programme has helped train 37,207 teachers and classroom assistants, and 2,696,788 children have been screened



"Rukmani is now happy. Even we are happy because now her life is on track. Now she can study"

Babulal, Rukmani's father

Rukmani's teacher detected her blinding cataract and helped to save her sight

Without her teacher's trained eye, four-year-old Rukmani could easily have lost the sight in one eye due to a cataract. Following straightforward surgery, Rukmani's vision has improved and she's no longer bumping into things or tilting her head to try and see. Thank you.

Transforming more lives

By signing up to Gift Aid, you've helped us reclaim over £2.3 million from your gifts in 2018, at no extra cost to you!

A huge thanks to all you amazing sight-savers who've signed up to Gift Aid, enabling us to claim back 25p in tax from every £1 you donate. That 25p alone is more than enough to protect a person from trachoma! We rely on this extra funding and here are some of the amazing things it can help achieve.



39,031

more communities can be protected against trachoma, including families like Maimbolwa, Sililo and Inutu's on page 7



14,636

more children with disabilities can be educated at school and reach their full potential as adults, like Nanny and Adieme on page 9



Beating trachoma

Eleven-year-old Peace is a school health club ambassador, just like Charles on page 4. "A clean face means healthy eyes," says Peace. "At home I tell my brothers to wash their faces and clean their hands." With Gift Aid, your donations could help us set up more school health clubs as we fight to eliminate trachoma by 2025.



26,021

more children can receive sight-saving, life-changing cataract operations, such as Rukmani on page 11

A minute of your time could help save someone's sight

You can sign up for Gift Aid today by using the form on the enclosed letter, or by contacting our Supporter Care Team on 01444 446600. It won't cost you a thing, but it could mean an awful lot.



Sightsavers

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