



Tackling the world's biggest cause of visual impairment

Inside Sightsavers' refractive error strategy

Our vision is a world where no one is blind from avoidable causes and where people with disabilities can participate equally in society.

We have developed five thematic strategies to deliver our overarching vision:

1. Refractive error
2. Eye health
3. Inclusive education
4. Neglected tropical diseases
5. Social inclusion

Our principles

1. Leave no one behind
2. Coherence
3. Sustainability
4. System strengthening
5. Quality
6. Evidence-based
7. Partnership and participation
8. Alliances
9. Safeguarding

Global frameworks that guide our refractive error strategy

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Vision correction plays an important part in 'Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' and cuts across many of the SDGs. Sightsavers' refractive error strategy contributes to a range of different SDGs and targets:



UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Article 25 of the convention states that people with disabilities have the right to be treated with dignity and have access to services on an equal basis with others. Article 9 highlights the need for ensuring "access to medical facilities, transportation, information and communications", both in rural and urban areas. Access to refractive services and products is an essential part of this.

World Report on Vision 2019: The report, and accompanying World Health Assembly Resolution (WHA 73.4), guides eye health – including refractive error – policy and programme action for the next 10 years. It emphasises that the integration of refractive services into eye health and universal health coverage is a critical health priority.

Our approach

Good health and wellbeing are essential for everyone and vision plays a critical role in every facet and stage of life. Improving people's vision through inclusive, high-quality refractive services allows children to learn and adults to earn – it helps to improve confidence, independence, productivity and wellbeing. We follow an evidence-informed, multisectoral and systems-focused approach to ensure that people with refractive error have access to quality services, spectacles and the treatment they need over time – a continuum of care.

Unaddressed refractive error is the largest cause of vision loss



161 million people live with distance vision impairment or blindness



510 million people live with near vision impairment.

For these people, **sight can be restored** with an eye examination and appropriate spectacles.

Our strategic goals

We have three strategic goals that are driven by cross-cutting themes.

Impact: All people of all ages have equitable access to high-quality, affordable refractive error services thereby improving wellbeing, learning outcomes and economic productivity.



Goal 1: Promote and support refractive services as an integral part of universal health coverage



Goal 2: Develop equitable and inclusive approaches to increase access to, and use of, high-quality sustainable refractive services



Goal 3: Strengthen and diversify partnerships and alliances that maximise the impact for those in most need and provide value for money to stakeholders



Theme 1: Inclusion and equity



Theme 2: Access and quality



Theme 3: Sustainability and scale

Cover image: Ariane sees well with her glasses during lessons at her primary school in Mali.
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Inclusion and equity

Outcome 1: Increased availability of high-quality refractive error services that are gender responsive and disability-inclusive

- We focus on effective advocacy and policy engagement to promote the integration of refractive and optical services into health and education systems
- We invest in research and data to support evidence-informed planning, interventions, advocacy and decision-making
- We help service providers adopt inclusive approaches to ensure that women and girls, and people with disabilities, have access to high-quality refractive services

Access and quality

Outcome 2: Improved access and use of affordable, high-quality refractive error services that are responsive to population needs

- We invest in supporting the development of a competent and well-resourced workforce that delivers high-quality, easily accessible refractive services at national levels
- We pilot engagement with the private sector to strengthen access, affordability and quality of refractive services and products. We also look for ways to drive down costs and increase the inclusion and sustainability of refractive services

Sustainability and scale

Outcome 3: Improved refractive error resourcing, maximised collective impact, and increased accountability and scale

- We work with governments, service providers, civil society and communities to ensure that policies, plans and budgets promote provision of refractive services and spectacles
- We strengthen partnerships and alliances to advocate for, and galvanise, more and better domestic and external investment for refractive services and programmes

Climate change and the environment

We recognise the effects of climate change on the communities we work with. We also know the potential negative impact that our programmes may have on the environment. It's our responsibility to monitor and limit our environmental impact. We incorporate environmentally sustainable approaches in refractive error programmes to support eco-friendly and climate-smart health systems strengthening.

Sightsavers will **not** endorse:



Screening without the availability of examination, including refraction, spectacle provision and appropriate referral mechanism



Sporadic refraction camps which are independent of health and education systems



The use of personnel who are inadequately trained, supported or supervised



The use of glass lenses for children (we strongly recommend polycarbonate/plastic lenses)



The use of recycled spectacles



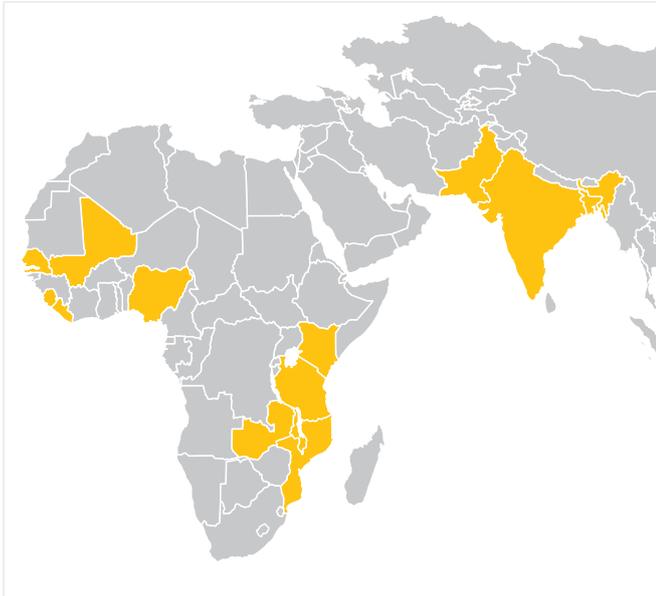
Self-refraction with adjustable spectacles



Any programmes or activities that don't follow Sightsavers' safeguarding policy and practices; or systematically exclude specific population groups

Our portfolio

We are supporting the provision of refractive services in 12 countries through 20 initiatives. To ensure continuum of care, most of these interventions are embedded in our inclusive eye health programmes.



Pakistan: We are working with the ministries of health and education, and private sector stakeholders, to improve national and provincial systems for integrated action on unaddressed refractive error and to ensure access to refractive services for rural communities. We are also supporting Pakistan’s first accredited dispensing optician diploma course.

India: In partnership with ministries of health and education, our National School Eye Health Programme aims to provide eye health services and spectacles to school age children through focusing on sustainable service delivery, increasing eye health awareness and supporting an enabling environment.

Eye health and good vision play a vital role in road safety. Our National Truckers Eye Health Programme, RAAHI, in India takes the refractive error services directly to them to increase access to care.

Liberia: We are working with the government to support a School Health Integrated Programme that focuses on deworming and eye health services. The programme is also generating evidence on the costs and cost-effectiveness of the model.

Kenya: We are conducting a market analysis to guide the feasibility and development of a market-shaping refractive services programme for semi-urban and rural communities.

Sierra Leone: We are working with the Ministry of Health and Sanitation and District Health Offices to establish accessible and environmentally sustainable vision centres to provide refractive and optical services in remote communities.

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Our strategies are developed through robust consultation with a range of partners, including ministries, organisations of people with disabilities and international development agencies.

QR code link to our full refractive error strategy

