

VISION FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE



Spectrum Markets is proud to partner with Sightsavers. To mark World Sight Day, we spoke to their corporate relationships manager, Rob King, to find out more about the important work of this unique charity.

Hi Rob. Could you begin by explaining what World Sight Day is, how did it begin and what are its aims?

World Sight Day was first observed in 2000 and is an International Day of Awareness, held annually on the second Thursday of October. This year, World Sight Day is Thursday, 13 October 2022.

World Sight Day is a reminder to think about the importance of your eye health and how you can protect it and keep it healthy now and long into the future.

Sightsavers has its origins in the 1950s, what inspired its creation and where did it initially operate?

Sightsavers was founded in 1950 by Sir John Wilson. He was blinded by an explosion during a school chemistry lesson and, despite the challenges he faced, he went on to secure a law degree from Oxford University.

During a nine-month tour of the Africa and the Middle East Sir John was shocked at the scale of blindness he witnessed and the conditions in which he found blind people living. He returned home determined to do something about it.

And so, on 5 January 1950, the British Empire Society for the Blind, as Sightsavers was originally known, was founded. The Society helped to advance the rights of blind people, in particular to remove the stigma of being blind in Africa through social inclusion, training and education.

Can you tell us a little about the Nigeria Childhood Blindness Project? What are its goals and what has been achieved so far?

Blindness and other visual impairments prevent children from attending and succeeding at school, severely limiting their chance of a better life.

We are working to reduce childhood blindness in three states in Nigeria: Kaduna, Sokoto and Zamfara. This project is creating the health infrastructure to provide desperately needed child eye care services for a population of over eight million children, tackling avoidable blindness and enabling those with visual impairments to get glasses to help them at school. Cataract surgeries will restore children's sight, transforming their lives.

2021 project outputs:

No. of children screened with visual acuity test	243,764
No. of children referred to health facilities for further tests	10,335
No. of children who are given glasses at health facilities	706
No. of community health workers trained to identify visual impairment	218
No. of teachers trained to do visual acuity testing at schools	1,937
No. of cataract surgeries performed	353

How does the involvement of partners like Spectrum Markets help you in what you do?

Working with corporate partners like Spectrum Markets helps Sightsavers to make a much bigger impact than we would be able to by acting alone. These partnerships not only provide Sightsavers with vital funding for our work, they also help to raise awareness through employees, clients and customers.

Why is the work that Sightsavers is doing important – what do you see as the wider societal impact of what Sightsavers does?

All areas of our work can have a huge impact on individuals and the wider community. From providing a child with a pair of glasses which will help them with their education, to supporting the elimination of a neglected tropical disease from an entire country, ensuring people are protected from these terrible diseases.

Our economic empowerment and inclusion work provides people with disabilities the opportunity to work, learn and be happy.

How does Sightsavers reach the beneficiaries of the work you do? Who is engaged on the ground delivering Sightsavers' work and how are regional and national governments engaged?

Sightsavers has country offices in most of the countries where we work, with local staff responsible for managing our projects on the ground. We also work with regional and national governments and local NGOs. We work with governments to ensure the impact of our work is sustainable and is integrated into existing health, education and welfare systems.

This month the WHO announced the elimination of the infectious eye disease trachoma in Malawi, a result of work done by Sightsavers. That's a wonderful achievement. What other similar milestones has Sightsavers experienced?

Working with the Ministry of Health and partners, Sightsavers also played a vital role in the elimination of trachoma in Ghana in 2018.

In April 2021, The Gambia became the second country in sub-Saharan Africa to eliminate trachoma, as confirmed by the World Health Organization. We helped to achieve this milestone by treating people with advanced stages of the disease, often through surgery, and monitoring active cases of trachoma across the country. We also helped to distribute antibiotics to protect against the disease.

What do you expect will be the biggest issues around eye health in the coming years – how are you preparing to face them?

With ageing and increasing populations, the number of people with vision loss is estimated to grow by 55% over the next 30 years¹. It is vital we work to ensure that everyone has access to quality eye services.

Thank you very much!

today to discuss how the seamless market access that our venue provides, can help to grow your retail client business.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you wish to receive further detail.

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