

# WORLD SIGHT DAY 2023 UPDATE

**Caroline Harper, Chief Executive of Sightsavers**



Globally, £300bn is lost in productivity each year because of visual impairment and blindness. But it doesn't have to be this way. World Sight Day brings together organisations from around the world working to alleviate this burden, such as our charity partner Sightsavers. To mark World Sight Day 2023, we've received reports from the people working on the ground to make a difference, and we spoke with **Caroline Harper, Chief Executive of Sightsavers**, for an update on the Nigeria Childhood Blindness Project, which Spectrum Markets supports.

## What were the goals of the Nigeria Childhood Blindness Project for the past year?

The project has the overarching goal to ensure children have improved access to quality child eye health services in Kaduna, Sokoto and Zamfara States in Nigeria. It also has three specific objectives: giving girls and boys with visual impairment access to eye health services in the project areas, providing tertiary eye health facilities to deliver quality eye health services in the project areas, and for the national government to create a policy environment that strengthens the provision of eye health and inclusive education services.

## And what have been Sightsavers' biggest achievements since we last heard from you?

Over the last year, and thanks to the support of incredible corporate partners like Spectrum Markets and other vital donors, Sightsavers has examined nearly 9 million people for eye conditions, supported over 450,000 cataract surgeries, provided over 780,000 pairs of glasses, supported 13,000 children with disabilities in schools, trained nearly 60,000 people on health-related courses and trained 243,000 village volunteers.

## THIS YEAR'S RESULTS

**NEARLY  
9 MILLION**

**PEOPLE EXAMINED  
FOR EYE CONDITIONS**

**OVER  
450,000**

**CATARACT SURGERIES  
SUPPORTED**

**OVER  
780,000**

**PAIRS OF  
GLASSES PROVIDED**

**OVER  
135 MILLION**

**TREATMENTS PROVIDED  
FOR NEGLECTED  
TROPICAL DISEASES**

**OVER  
27,000**

**SURGERIES SUPPORTED  
FOR THE ADVANCED  
FORM OF TRACHOMA**

**NEARLY  
60,000**

**PEOPLE TRAINED  
ON HEALTH-RELATED  
COURSES**

**243,000**

**VILLAGE VOLUNTEERS  
TRAINED INCLUDING  
COMMUNITY DRUG  
DISTRIBUTORS**

**13,000**

**CHILDREN WITH  
DISABILITIES GIVEN  
SUPPORT IN  
SCHOOLS**

**OVER  
24,000**

**PEOPLE WITH  
DISABILITIES TRAINED  
IN LIVELIHOOD  
SKILLS AND RIGHTS**

*"I am glad to be part of this beautiful and passionate journey embarked by Sightsavers to restore vision and give hope to the underprivileged children in our society, as Jackie Chan once said, 'Sometimes it takes only one act of kindness and caring to change a person's life.'"*

Dr Amina Hassan, Paediatric ophthalmologist, National Eye Center, Kaduna

*"The project has improved access to cataract surgical services for many children in financial difficulties and given us a chance to be part of the solution."*

Dr Aminatu A. AbdulRahman, Paediatric Ophthalmologist, National Eye Center, Kaduna

## How has Spectrum Markets' partnership with Sightsavers contributed to this work?

Funding from Spectrum Markets has helped transform the lives of children in the Nigeria Childhood Blindness Project. Providing a pair of glasses to a child in need enables them to thrive in school, play with their friends and not be left behind. The Children's Day projects Spectrum Markets has supported will remain a vivid memory for all the children who have taken part over the years. Every single donation to this project has helped us to ensure that the children in the project area receive the support they need, when they need it. It is immeasurable in terms of impact.

*"The project has enabled children in hard-to-reach communities to receive life-changing surgery at a facility out of their reach both physically and financially. The capacity building provided to the workforce has improved the skills of anaesthesia and ophthalmic teams over time."*

Professor Nasiru Muhammad, Paediatric ophthalmologist, Usman Danfodio University, Sokoto

*"It's a pleasure to have Sightsavers as partners in our state supporting the Northwest Nigeria child eye health initiative. This is a project that helped children 0-16 years of age. A very significant number of children benefited from this project, some had cataract extraction, some were refracted, some were given spectacles and other services pertaining eye care were rendered free of charge. The entire staff of eye care unit as well as public health department both in the Kaduna state ministry of health enjoyed collaborating with Sightsavers, especially in respect to this project. May the Lord in his mercy grant us the ability to cater for less the privileged."*

Yahaya Sani, Programme Manager, Kaduna State Ministry of Health

## Were there any new challenges faced by the project over the past year, and how were these challenges tackled?

Rising inflation has greatly affected the cost of surgical services being delivered by the hospitals. The cost of surgery has quadrupled in the last year. The project partners (National Eye Hospital, Kaduna and Usman Danfodio University Teaching Hospital) were very responsive to this and agreed to a modest increase in the charges to Sightsavers while bearing the additional cost as their reasonable contribution to the partnership. This is an interim measure as a new cost for surgery will be made to reflect the current financial realities.

Rising insecurity continues to affect the project, too. Although the massive security threats to the project have abated in the last year, some communities are still threatened, and the children there do not have ready access to travel to the hospital. Some schools are still shut, depriving the children of access to school vision opportunities. To ensure that children in security-compromised areas are not left behind, the programme ensures that they only travel to the hospital when there is a favourable security report from Sightsavers. We also ensure that trained health workers in those communities provide an initial screening and treatment of minor eye conditions until they can travel.

## TARGETS FOR THE NEXT 12 MONTHS\*

**195,607**

**CHILDREN SCREENED  
FOR VISUAL  
IMPAIRMENT**

**1,956**

**CHILDREN GIVEN  
SIGHT TEST  
(REFRACTION)**

**250**

**CATARACT SURGERIES  
PERFORMED**

**250**

**TEACHERS TRAINED  
ON VISION SCREENING**

**978**

**SPECTACLES  
DISPENSED**

**150**

**COMMUNITY WORKERS  
TRAINED TO IDENTIFY  
VISUAL IMPAIRMENT**

## What impact does World Sight Day have on causes that Sightsavers supports?

World Sight Day is a fantastic opportunity to raise awareness of the importance of eye care for all. Sightsavers, as a leading partner in the field on a global scale, uses the day to focus attention on the fact that there is a vast unmet need when it comes to eye health. For instance, there are 1.1 billion people who have an untreated or preventable visual impairment – an eighth of the world's population.

With the support of our corporate partners like Spectrum Markets, we can ensure that a far wider audience hears about our work on World Sight Day; meaning we have a greater chance of reaching more people in need, more quickly.

Everyone who works in the eye health sector works in partnership on World Sight Day to capture the attention of decision-makers in governments, to try and ensure that eye health is prioritised within wider health plans. It can sometimes become neglected as a health issue when governments are making funding decisions because of so many unmet needs within communities, but with your help we can highlight the economic and sustainability benefits of investing in eye care.

*"The Child Eye Health project has been planned to provide a positive life-changing impact for the children and their caregivers. We have had tremendous support from our donors, Spectrum Markets, which has enabled us to make the change in their lives. Working through numerous challenges, we aim to ensure the children get the best care available and ensure their safety. Our programme partners in Nigeria are very committed and we thank them for their support. In a span of 4 months this year, we have supported cataract surgery for 85 children, many of whom had to drop out of school because of their poor vision. We are happy that some of them have resumed school."*

Selben Penzin, Abdurrahman – Eye Health, Sightsavers Nigeria Country Office

## For individuals who are interested in supporting Sightsavers, how can they get involved?

There are two main ways that an individual can support Sightsavers' work; as a donor and as a campaigner. Individuals can make a one-off donation or a monthly donation by visiting our website [www.sightsavers.org](#) And you can support our campaigning efforts by visiting our campaigning website [www.sightsavers.org/campaign](#)

For those who want to support us on World Sight Day this year, we are encouraging people to make their own 'Eye Creation' and post this on social media on the day itself – Thursday 12th October - tagging Sightsavers. To find out more, please watch our #EyeCreation video [www.sightsavers.org/eye-creation](#)

\*Estimates which will be reviewed and agreed with the programme partners before finalising

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