



For Immediate Release:

Operation Eyesight Universal and the Malawi Ministry of Health open new vision centre for Chitipa to bring enhanced, accessible and affordable eye health care to the district

The new vision centre will provide eye health care including eye exams, spectacles and cataract surgery, and is part of a five-year community health project Operation Eyesight Universal launched in 2023

Media are invited to attend the opening of the Operation Eyesight Vision Centre, Chitipa District Hospital on Friday, March 14 from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Ceremony location: The ceremony will take place at the new Operation Eyesight Vision Centre, next to the Chitipa District Hospital's Emergency Treatment Unit (ETU) behind Chitipa Community Stadium.

Scheduled to attend: Authority Mwaulambiya, District Commissioner Mr. Magomero; Malawi Minister of Health, Honourable Khumbize Kandodo Chiponda; Mr. Blessings Banda, Malawi Program Manager, Operation Eyesight Universal; and Mr. Phiri Kennedy, Country Director, Zambia & Malawi, Operation Eyesight Universal.

Mzuzu, Malawi, March 14, 2025: Operation Eyesight Universal, the Malawi Ministry of Health and Chitipa District Hospital officially open a new vision centre to serve the Chipita District on Friday, March 14. The vision centre, named the "Operation Eyesight Vision Centre," will help meet the growing need for eye health care for the 256,197 people of Chitipa district. It is part of a five-year community eye health care project that Operation Eyesight launched in 2023. Through the vision centre, eye health care including eye exams, eye disease treatment and cataract surgeries will be available. There is also an optical shop with spectacles.

A growing need for eye health care in Chitipa

Until now, eye health care was provided by the Chitipa District Council at the Chitipa District Hospital. Initially, 15 to 20 people a day were seen, and this grew to 50 to 60 people daily. This exceeded the hospital's capacity, and people were referred to Karong District, over 100 km away, and the Mzuzu Central Hospital, more than 347 kilometers away. As a result, many people went untreated.

To provide enhanced and additional eye health care, Operation Eyesight and the Malawi Ministry of Health launched the community eye health care project in Chitipa. Operation



Eyesight collected community and hospital data through surveys to determine eye health care needs. They found:

- Significant vision loss from uncorrected refractive error (the leading cause of vision loss in the world which causes blurred vision) and presbyopia (age-related loss of vision), both are treated with eye exams and prescription spectacles
- Treatment posed a challenge as there is low access to spectacles in Chitipa
- 50 per cent of blindness was caused by cataracts, which is treated with surgery
- 15 per cent of blindness was caused by trachoma, a blinding eye disease that is the leading cause of infectious blindness and is caused by bacteria
- 6 per cent are blind from a combination of vitamin A deficiency, measles and harmful traditional practices

Using this community data, Operation Eyesight built the vision centre in Chitipa in 2024, on land next to the district hospital's Emergency Treatment Unit (ETU). The organization conducted eye health care training for medical staff and equipped the centre with ophthalmic equipment. The project was made possible through funding from the **Estate of John and Gwendolen Margaret Crowe**, Canada.

Blessings Banda, Program Manager, Malawi, Operation Eyesight says, "Opening the vision centre will reduce travel and improve the quality eye care services for patients. This project excites me as the new centre is large enough to provide services to those in need. It includes an optical shop to improve access to spectacles for people in Chipita."

Kennedy Phiri, Country Director, Zambia & Malawi, Operation Eyesight says, "Operation Eyesight is committed to supporting the government of Malawi to improve the delivery of quality eye care and reach out to communities in need. This milestone today demonstrates that commitment and the great partnership that we have with the government."

Media are invited to attend or conduct interviews by phone. Photos can be provided by email or taken by media at the event.

Operation Eyesight Universal has worked in Malawi since 2022. In 2024, work was centred on hospital strengthening, upgrading four outpatient departments and operation theatres, one in each of the district hospitals of Chitipa, Karonga, Mzimba South and Mzimba North. By training cataract surgeons and ensuring partner facilities had the required equipment as well as the means to repair the equipment, Operation Eyesight and partners enabled all four districts to perform cataract surgeries.

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About Operation Eyesight Universal *Learn more about our work in Malawi at operationeyesight.com/malawi*

operationeyesight.com/newsroom



Operation Eyesight Universal is an international development organization that works to prevent blindness and restore sight. The organization started working in Malawi in 2022. Its vision is the elimination of avoidable vision loss. Founded in Canada in 1963, Operation Eyesight is a global community spanning four continents – Africa, Europe, North America and South Asia. Its vision is global and the focus local, with teams on the ground in communities of work. Through activities like community outreach, water and sanitation projects, and health education, Operation Eyesight is addressing the root causes of avoidable vision loss which contribute to six United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: no poverty, good health and well-being, quality education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, and partnerships for the goals.

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