

For Immediate Release

Operation Eyesight Universal Encourages Parents, Guardians, Caregivers and Children to Make Eye Health Care a Priority this World Sight Day (Thursday, 10 October) – in Kenya and across the world

450 million children worldwide have an eye condition that requires treatment – detecting and treating eye conditions early can prevent lifelong consequences of vision loss

Media are invited to attend eye screenings at St. Marks Academy, Kajiado North Sub-County on 8th October, between 08:00 and 16:00 hours

Nairobi, Kenya, Saturday, 5 October, 2024: Operation Eyesight Universal is championing child eye health care leading up to and around World Sight Day, Thursday, 10 October 2024, alongside its County government partners and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) and its 250 global members. Currently, [450 million children worldwide have an eye condition that requires treatment, and 90 million children live with sight loss, according to the IAPB Focus on Child Eye Health 2022 Report](#). Early detection of eye conditions is essential as [approximately 40 per cent of childhood blindness is preventable or treatable, states the IAPB Vision Atlas](#). Children who go without treatment can face lifelong consequences – those with vision loss in low- to middle-income countries are two to five times less likely to attend school.

Operation Eyesight Universal has been working to prevent blindness and restore sight in Kenya since 2007 and has programs covering nine counties. In 2023, Operation Eyesight and partners screened 69,891 students through school eye health programs across 265 schools, in collaboration with the Ministries of Health and Education. As a result, 2,062 people received a pair of prescription eyeglasses. From 2021 to 2023, Operation Eyesight implemented a project to reduce barriers to eye health care for students, such as cost and transportation. It was funded by the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID's) Child Blindness Program and run in partnership with the Government of Kenya. Operation Eyesight trained 20 teachers to do eye screenings with a smartphone app from Peek Vision called Peek Acuity. In total, the program screened more than 136,805 students and 4,216 teachers, and as a result 5,758 students were treated, 1,837 spectacles were dispersed and 787 children had operations. [View a video on the School Eye Health Program in Kenya](#).

Caroline Ikumu, Program Manager, says, "Child eye health is a significant public health issue. There are thousands of children in Kenya who are needlessly blind or visually impaired. These children are not able to achieve their maximum potential, given that 80 per cent of learning is visual." Ikumu adds that "diagnosing eye problems early can help minimize damage and makes treatment faster and more effective, hence the need to support screening of children in schools and in the community." Ikumu emphasizes the need to educate parents on the importance of helping children to access eye health care.

Kashinath Bhoosnurmath, President and CEO of Operation Eyesight Universal and elected trustee of IAPB, says, "Every day, preventable and treatable eye health issues cause children to miss out on learning and social opportunities. They do not just deserve but have the right to a

happy childhood. Healthy eyes enable kids to learn, play and thrive, setting them on a path for life.” Through support from generous donors around the world, Operation Eyesight has been providing eye health care and child eye health for more than 60 years in Africa and South Asia.

A Spotlight on Child Eye Health Programs for World Sight Day

Ahead of World Sight Day, the Kenya team of Operation Eyesight is highlighting the following child eye health care activities:

- **Media are invited to attend school screening activities at St. Marks Academy in Kajiado North Sub-County on 8th October between the hours of 08:00 and 16:00.** This screening is part of the four-year Vision Impact Project, which aims to reduce vision impairment and avoidable blindness in Kajiado County. Since it launched in 2022, the Vision Impact Project, implemented in partnership with the Kajiado County Government and funded by CBM Christian Blind Mission, has screened more than half a million people, through door-to-door community screenings and those done in schools for learners and teachers.
- **Media are invited to attend a football tournament at Ngong Annex, Kajiado North Sub-County on 12th October, between 08:00 and 16:00 hours.** This tournament will be integrated with eye health education, screening and treatment for the children and youth watching football.
- In addition, eye screenings will be taking place at Operation Eyesight’s partner hospitals in Narok County, Uasin Gishu County, Nandi County and Kajiado County.
- On 9th October, Operation Eyesight staff will also attend a breakfast meeting with the Ministry of Health, Eye Health Section along with multiple eye health care INGOs in Kenya, and then attend the official opening of an eye hospital in Nairobi where there will be a community eye screening.

Child Eye Health Facts [Source: [The Issues - The International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness \(iapb.org\)](#)]

- 450 million children worldwide have an eye condition that requires treatment
- 90 million children live with some form of sight loss
- Children with vision loss in low- to middle-income countries are two to five times less likely to attend school
- 40 per cent of childhood blindness is preventable or treatable
- Wearing prescription spectacles can reduce class failure rates by 44 per cent

Help Children Love Their Eyes

- Parents, guardians and caregivers are encouraged to help the children in their lives to love their eyes with eye health tips and resources: operationeyesight.com/worldsightday
- Help all children love their eyes by donating at operationeyesight.com

About Operation Eyesight Universal Learn more or donate at operationeyesight.com/kenya



Operation Eyesight Universal is an international development organization, and registered charity in Kenya and multiple other countries, working to prevent blindness and restore sight. Its vision is the elimination of avoidable vision loss. Founded in Calgary, 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.

About World Sight Day

World Sight Day is an annual day of awareness, held on the second Thursday of October every year, to draw attention and action to vision loss in the world. The focus of World Sight Day for 2024 is child eye health. Currently, more than 1.1 billion people live with vision loss, and 90 per cent is avoidable or treatable, according to the [IAPB Vision Atlas](#). Vision loss and eye health care are highly correlated with complex and interconnected development issues such as the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness champions World Sight Day, as do its 250 members around the world.

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