

For Immediate Release

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

Lilongwe, Malawi, Wednesday, October 9, 2024: Operation Eyesight Universal is championing child eye health care this World Sight Day, Thursday, October 10, 2024, alongside its partner the Malawi Ministry of Health and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) and its more than 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. For those in need, wearing prescription spectacles can cut class failure rates by 44 per cent. 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, according to the IAPB Vision Atlas.

Operation Eyesight has been working to prevent blindness and restore sight in Malawi since 2022, at the invitation of the Ministry of Health. In 2023, Operation Eyesight established a vision centre in each district, while also building the capacities of the base hospitals to meet the needs of patients referred from project communities. It also arranged for two cataract surgeons from the district hospitals of Mzimba South and Chitipa to receive training at Nkhoma Mission Hospital in Lilongwe. In addition, Operation Eyesight provided primary eye care training for 12 ophthalmic staff and 14 community health volunteers, and launched a community eye health project in Chitipa, which will benefit more than 50,000 people.

In and around World Sight Day, Operation Eyesight is focusing on child, community and workplace eye health care by showcasing the following activities and programs:

- School eye screenings at 16 schools for 10,000 students in the districts of Karonga, Chitipa, Mzimba North and Mzimba South
- Community eye screenings, with a goal of screening 1,000 people and dispensing 75 spectacles in Kameme Health Centre in Chitipa District, Nyungwe Health Centre in Karonga District and Old Airport Ground in Mzimba South District
- Workplace eye screenings for 500 people and dispensing 50 spectacles at Mbelwa District Council for civil servants at the Mzimba District Council Offices; Chitipa District Council for civil servants at the Chitipa District Councils Office;

Karonga District Council for civil servants at Karonga District Councils Offices;
and the Mzuzu Agriculture Division

Yashwant Sinha, Director, Operation Eyesight International Programmes, says, “Children are the foundation of any nation's future, and this year's IAPB theme, ‘Love Your Eyes’ with a special focus on child eye health is both timely and essential. Safeguarding the vision of our children is not just a medical responsibility, but a societal one. Ensuring their eye health is crucial for enabling them to lead productive, fulfilling lives, and to ultimately contribute to the growth and prosperity of their communities and the nation as a whole. By prioritizing child eye health, we are investing in the well-being and success of the next generation.”

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.”

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 at* operationeyesight.com/malawi

Operation Eyesight Universal is an international development organization that works to prevent blindness and restore sight. 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.](#)

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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