



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

**Calgary, Alberta, Canada, Thursday, October 3, 2024:** Operation Eyesight Universal, headquartered in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, calls on parents, guardians and children to prioritize their eye health this World Sight Day, Thursday, October 10, 2024. Child eye health is the focus for World Sight Day and will be championed by the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) and its more than 200 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.](#) Clear vision and healthy eyes are related to quality of life and are highly correlated with attaining a quality education, good health and well-being, and reduction of poverty – all United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Prioritizing child eye health requires inclusive eye health care, which is accessible, affordable and available. Early detection of eye conditions is essential ([approximately 40 per cent of childhood blindness is preventable or treatable, according to the IAPB Vision Atlas](#)) and starts with eye screenings. When eye conditions are identified they can be treated. For many all that is needed is a pair of prescription eyeglasses, while others require further treatment; however, not all children have equal access to eye health care. Children with vision loss in low- to middle-income countries are two to five times less likely to attend school, states the IAPB Vision Atlas. This impacts future livelihoods and can lead to poverty.

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 in Canada and around the world, Operation Eyesight has been providing inclusive eye health care for over 60 years in South Asia and Africa. This includes child eye health care programs.

Leading up to World Sight Day, Operation Eyesight teams in South Asia and Africa are providing child eye health care including:

- hosting an event to highlight partnerships that will see 20,000 government school students get their eyes screened, with provision of prescription eyeglasses as needed, in Kurnool District, India
- training 30 Community Health Nurses to conduct school eye screenings, and 20 teachers to assist, in Weija Gbawe Municipality in Accra, Ghana
- celebrating many other activities across our 10 countries of work including school eye screenings in Ghana, Kenya, India and Zambia and other countries of work

### **A Spotlight on Child Eye Health Care**

In 2023, Operation Eyesight partnerships resulted in screening more than 240,000 students at 1,133 schools. Partnerships also resulted in screening 288 preterm infants in the Moradabad District of India for Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP), a leading cause of preventable childhood blindness worldwide. [Every year, India reports approximately 3.5 million preterm births with 5,000 babies requiring ROP treatment, according to the Indian Journal of Ophthalmology article Retinopathy of Prematurity.](#) Early screening and treatment can prevent a lifetime of blindness.

In Africa, Operation Eyesight works towards addressing many child eye health issues including trachoma, a bacterial infection that is a leading cause of vision loss in Ethiopia, Kenya and Zambia. Programs include mass drug administrations, access to clean water through community boreholes and sanitation education on washing hands, faces and clothing.

### **Eye Health Care in Canada**

In Canada, child eye health care varies by province, territory and eligibility of the Non-Insured Health Benefits program. Operation Eyesight advocates for universal health care that includes eye health care in Canada and around the world. Advancements are taking place in Canada as the [National Strategy for Eye Health Act, Bill C-284](#), went through the House of Commons and Senate and was referred to a Senate committee on May 29, 2024.

**Child Eye Health Facts**, as stated in the [IAPB Vision Atlas](#):

- 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 eyeglasses 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. Find child eye health tips and resources at [operationeyesight.com/worldsightday](https://operationeyesight.com/worldsightday)

**About Operation Eyesight Universal** *Learn more or donate at [operationeyesight.com](https://operationeyesight.com)*

Operation Eyesight Universal is an international development organization and registered charity working to prevent blindness and restore sight. Its vision is the elimination of avoidable vision loss. Founded in Calgary, Alberta, Canada in 1963, Operation Eyesight is now 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 to and action around 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 of this 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 200 members organizations around the world.

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