



Big smiles for fresh water and healthy eyes. Through the generosity of our donors and through local partnerships, we're providing communities with access to clean water — preventing the spread of blinding trachoma and bringing a host of other benefits. Photos by Paul Kulya, Program Manager, Zambia.

## Downstream impact

In the village of Kwanga, in southern Zambia, the rehabilitation of a borehole has meant local access to abundant, fresh water for the entire community.

For Natasha, it's brought the ability to attend school full time. Previously, she had to walk several kilometres each day to fetch water for her family. This took so much extra time and energy that she began missing school.

Together, we rehabilitated Kwanga's borehole in 2021. It's one of 96 non-functioning boreholes that we have rehabilitated in the past three years, in addition to the 106 that we have drilled in the Sinazongwe district, in Zambia's arid south.

This has helped eliminate blinding trachoma infections from the district. Locally-available water has also brought a host of benefits across communities like Natasha's, including improved

health outcomes, thriving local economies and improved opportunities for women and girls.

"When people have access to fresh water, they can wash their hands, faces and clothing and prevent the spread of trachoma and other infections as well," explains Paul Kulya, our Program Manager in Zambia. "We also see that access to water targets a range of different issues. It has an impact especially on those responsible for drawing water – the women and the children."

Paul has been working alongside communities in Zambia for four years and says he and his team have found that bringing water closer to where people live in fact improves school attendance.

"Where we are working, we actually have more girls in school than boys," he says. "It's giving them a chance to get an education."

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Now that the borehole in her village is functioning again, Natasha and several other girls in her class no longer have to haul water for long distances, and they are back attending school full time.

Access to clean water doesn't just help reduce the spread of infection — it brings long-lasting and sustainable change to the entire community.

Thanks to our donors and partnerships with local Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) committees that are trained to maintain boreholes and ensure their longevity, we're creating a ripple effect that is being felt in other communities across Zambia.



With less time spent hauling water long distances, locally-available water gives students like Natasha (pictured here with her brother) the opportunity to attend school and thrive.

## A fundraiser...150 years in the making



When members of the First Baptist Church in Petrolia, Ontario sat down to choose an organization to support for the church's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the decision was unanimous.

"Operation Eyesight kept coming up because of the previous connection," says Janet Whitlock, the project's lead.

It's a connection that began in the 1960s when Dr. Ben Gullison delivered a talk at the church.

A medical missionary in Sompeta, India, Dr. Guillson helped build a hospital in the region and later established a service to provide free cataract surgeries to people in the area. That

Janet Whitlock and Pastor Alex Craig proudly display their church's fundraising progress. Members of the First Baptist Church in Petrolia were challenged to put away a dollar a day – the price of a cup of coffee – towards Operation Eyesight.

initiative would become the inspiration behind Operation Eyesight.

The church continued to support Operation Eyesight in the decades to come, hosting fundraisers to support our mission of preventing blindness and restoring sight.

Church and community members stepped up to save a dollar a day to put toward the goal. With more than \$14,000 raised to date, the congregation is confident they will reach their goal of raising \$15,000.

*Thank you First Baptist Church of Petrolia for marking this important milestone by giving the gift of sight!*



Lucia of Lamaon village, Kenya received surgery and eyeglasses and can once again decorate beautiful gourds, earn an income and live independently.



Lamaon village is one of 15 villages across Kenya's Elgeyo Marakwet County to be declared free of avoidable blindness in 2021.

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## One village at a time

When 62-year-old Lucia lost her left eye and then began losing vision in her remaining eye, she lost more than just her sight; she lost her art and source of income.

She also struggled to do her daily chores at home and on the farm.

After more than a decade in near-blindness, she received sight-restoring eye surgery and eyeglasses free of charge after being referred by an Operation Eyesight Community Health Volunteer (CHV) last year, during a door-to-door survey.

In addition to reminding us of the importance of taking charge of our eye health, Lucia taught us that an awkward hard-shelled fruit could be a work of art.

"I can now decorate my gourds with beads and make clothes," she says. "This is something I abandoned 11 years ago."

Lucia's village of Lamaon in Kenya's Elgeyo Marakwet County is one of 15 villages across the county that was declared avoidable blindness-free

last year, bringing us one step closer to our goal of declaring 50 villages in the county free of cases of unidentified refractive errors, cataracts and other conditions.

By empowering volunteers to screen others in their community for vision problems, we are able to identify community members with vision problems and refer them to an eye unit or partner hospital for care.

CHVs also provide health education to communities regarding primary eye care and child and maternal health.

We conducted refresher training for 10 CHVs in Kenya in 2021, out of 82 volunteers that we work with. This community-based team reached 4,477 people in their communities with health education and eye health screening last year.

"It's our Community Health Volunteer presence in communities that ensures these communities are free of avoidable blindness not just this year but in years to come," explains Alice Mwangi, Country Director for Kenya.



Two-year-old Shiva, pictured with his father, received life-saving surgery and treatment on his right eye — free of charge — at the Operation Eyesight Universal Institute for Eye Cancer.



The “Wall of Hope” with handprints of children treated for retinoblastoma at the Operation Eyesight Universal Institute for Eye Cancer. Each handprint represents a life saved, thanks to our donors and partners. Photos courtesy of LVPEI.

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## Early diagnosis and treatment save toddler from deadly eye cancer

Most toddlers keep themselves busy exploring their world with bright, wide-open eyes.

When the parents of two-year-old Shiva, from India, noticed a squint in his right eye, they knew right away that something was wrong. They took him to a government hospital where he was diagnosed with retinoblastoma.

The most common eye cancer in children, retinoblastoma usually affects kids under three. It is treatable when detected early, but half of children diagnosed with eye cancer worldwide lose their lives due to late detection and inadequate treatment.

Shiva’s parents took him to the Operation Eyesight Universal Institute for Eye Cancer at the L V Prasad Eye Institute (LVPEI) in Hyderabad, where the diagnosis was confirmed.

Established in 2015 through support from one of our generous donors, the facility provides treatment for patients free of charge if they are unable to afford it.

Shiva’s right eye was removed, and his chemotherapy treatment spanned five months. Afterwards he was fitted with a prosthetic eye. Today, he now has the same chance to attend school and play with other children in his neighbourhood.

Shiva’s father, a farm labourer, is grateful for the free, life-saving care the Institute provided his son.

“Sometimes we wonder what might have happened to our child if we had not visited LVPEI in time,” he says. “And then we thank God, Dr. Swathi Kaliki [facility head] and the L V Prasad Eye Institute.”

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## Leave a lasting legacy

For Mohammad from India, poor eyesight from birth threatened to close the door on opportunity.

Despite worsening sight and the advice from doctors, the seven-year-old's father was unable to bring him for regular eye checkups due to the distance of the family's village from the nearest eye hospital.

Thanks to the establishment of a vision centre in nearby Sahaspur, Mohammad's father was able to take him for an eye exam. The boy was prescribed new eyeglasses, giving him the same opportunity to play and participate in school as other children in his neighbourhood.

Generous donations and bequests from donors like you are creating a lasting impact for children like Mohammad, who might otherwise continue to live with preventable blindness.



Seven-year-old Mohammad received prescription eyeglasses, thanks to a vision centre which opened near his home.

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## Will power

Have you ever wondered about continuing your generous support of Operation Eyesight through a bequest? We've partnered with Will Power, a national campaign designed to educate Canadians on how they can use their wills as powerful tools to support their loved ones while also leaving a charitable gift.

Leaving one per cent of the assets in your will to Operation Eyesight can have a meaningful impact, while the remaining 99 per cent of your estate can support your loved ones. The gift of sight is enduring and immeasurable, and leaving a bequest enables your legacy of kindness to continue for future generations.

Visit [willpower.ca/charities/operation-eyesight](http://willpower.ca/charities/operation-eyesight) to try out the estate calculator at the bottom of the webpage.

Questions? Please call **Alena Schock** at 1-800-585-8265. We appreciate your feedback and look forward to answering any questions you may have about leaving a gift in your will to Operation Eyesight.

### Get in touch

-  1-800-585-8265
-  [info@operationeyesight.com](mailto:info@operationeyesight.com)
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