



Last year we provided over 200 pairs of prescription eyeglasses to Kenyan students like Amandah, left. Access to quality eye care empowers students to participate in class, learn and build social connections. © Peek Vision/Operation Eyesight

## Futures coming into focus

Amandah is a girl with big dreams.

"I hope to be a designer when I grow up," explains the fourth grader in Uasin Gishu County, located in Kenya's Rift Valley region.

Sitting in class, Amandah throws her hand into the air as her teacher asks the class a math question – but it wasn't always this way.

"Before I got my glasses, I couldn't see very well from afar, no matter how close I was to the blackboard," says Amandah.

Last year, she received free prescription eyeglasses through our school eye health program. Launched in 2021, the program has to date screened more than 86,000 children and 2,200 teachers for eye conditions across 220 schools in the county.

It's part of our focus on achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, including improving access to quality education and achieving gender equality.

Thanks to partnership with Kenya's national government, Peek Vision and the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID's) Child Blindness Program, more than 8,000 students have been identified as having eye conditions and were referred for treatment.

"People often do not seek eye health care – or are simply unable to access it – for a variety of reasons," says Alice Mwangi, our Country Director for Kenya. "We also know that women and girls are more likely to suffer vision impairment and face barriers to care."

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Today, we're partnering with communities, focused on expanding school eye health programs in Africa and South Asia.

"I would like to thank the people who gave me the glasses," says Amandah. "Now that I can read and see well, I hope I will be able to achieve my dream."

Learn more about our school eye health programs and how you can help at [operationeyesight.com/schooleyeyehealth](https://operationeyesight.com/schooleyeyehealth).

Our school eye health programs train teachers and school staff to conduct eye exams and identify common eye conditions, using the smartphone app Peek Acuity.



## Finding care in the community



Through the generosity of donors like you, Piu from Bangladesh received prescription eyeglasses and treatment, which allowed her to return to school.

When six-year-old Piu began experiencing painful watery, red eyes, blurred vision and headaches, her mother, Sathi, and father, Dipongok, were understandably worried.

"I felt sad that others could read and write in class while my child was unable to do that," Sathi says.

Piu, who lives with her parents and four-year-old brother in a village in Bangladesh, began losing interest in her studies. Anxious and helpless, Piu's parents feared what their daughter's future might look like.

During a community screening at Piu's school, our local health workers referred her to a vision centre less than a kilometre from her home, where she received prescription eyeglasses and medication for her eyes.

With Piu's vision restored, her parents say they no longer worry about her future and are confident their daughter will thrive at school.





Mary Benzo, an educator in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya, says school eye health programs not only connect students with sustainable and accessible eye care but also connect families and communities with their local health system.

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## Empowering educators

As a teacher working in special needs education in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya, Mary Benzo has seen the difference eye health care can make in the lives of students.

As part of our school eye health program, we trained Mary and other school staff to do vision screenings using the smartphone app Peek Acuity. Students are then referred to one of our eye units if they need more testing or need prescription eyeglasses. We also connect patients with one of our local partner hospitals if additional treatment is required.

Mary says seeing children thrive is the most rewarding part of her work with students.

"When they were given their glasses, they were very happy because their self-esteem was raised up," Mary recalls. "They had the confidence to socialize, because they are able to study and read fine details and see on the blackboard."

Mary has helped identify students who need eyeglasses, students with cataract or tumors, and those suffering from allergies.

"As an eye screener...when learners come for an eye assessment, if there is an eye issue, I use my smartphone to screen them," Mary explains. "I feel very much empowered."

Mary says the benefits of school screening don't stop at the end of the school day. She says it's rewarding to see the impact on not only students but their families at home as well.

"I have learned that I can talk to their parents, to the children and screen them," she adds.

"I'm proud that I'm able to reach the unreachable."

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# Give the Gift of Sight this holiday season



The Gift of Sight is so much more than a pair of eyeglasses or sight-restoring surgery.

For a child, it can mean inclusion at school and with friends. For a parent, it can mean the ability to provide and care for their family. For a senior, it can mean independence.

Many eye health conditions are treatable. Giving the Gift of Sight on behalf of a loved one this holiday season is a great way to share hope, joy and endless possibilities by bringing quality eye health care to someone who needs it.

Both printed greeting cards and electronic cards are available. Watch for gift order forms in your mail this October, or visit [operationeyesight.com/giftofsight](https://operationeyesight.com/giftofsight) to learn more. Thank you in advance for your support this holiday season!

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## Eyeglasses end isolation for student



Remus stands outside his classroom in Mfantseman, Central Ghana, where school eye health programs are connecting patients with eye health care.

Remus is a top student in his class, but his inability to see the blackboard isolated him from his peers.

"I have always loved school," he says. "I plan to follow in my parents' footsteps by getting a master's degree in the future."

For many years, he struggled to see the blackboard, typically arriving early to get a seat at the front of the room.

"I couldn't sit with my friends during class. I never understood why I was the only one struggling to see. It made me feel isolated from them."

Last year, Remus received a vision exam from his teacher and was referred for a formal exam from the resident optometrist.

"I was prescribed glasses that have changed everything," he says. "I thought my condition was specific to me and no one else, but there are many other students who received glasses through this program – even one of my friends!"

Remus is now able to see far-off objects with confidence and clarity.

"I'm grateful to be able to see the blackboard while sitting with my friends. I no longer feel like the odd one out at school."



At just 16, Nikhil is making a difference in global eye health. "Having healthy eyesight is very important for learning, employment and social engagement, no matter where you live," says Nikhil.

Meet our people:

## Nikhil Srivalsan, Philanthropist

When 16-year-old Nikhil Srivalsan put on his first pair of glasses two years ago, his mind filled with memories of a family trip to India, where he noticed many seniors were affected with cataracts.

He was shocked to learn that India has one of the world's largest blind populations, including children, and more than half of it was preventable. Nikhil realized how fortunate he was to be living in a country like Canada.

Inspired to help make eye care more accessible globally, Nikhil hosted an online fundraiser through Canada Helps and hopes other young philanthropists will do the same.

"I was scared initially, thinking I wouldn't see community support, but I never let the passion fueling me die out," he explains. With support from friends, family and the greater community, Nikhil raised \$2,164 to provide quality eye health care for underserved communities in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

"I'm grateful to the generous donors who took time to learn about Operation Eyesight and who graciously contributed to the cause."



Nikhil says he encourages others to consider hosting fundraisers to benefit those who need it most.

"My advice to others is to remember that it sometimes takes stepping out of your comfort zone to reach your personal goals," he says. "Hosting this fundraiser required me to do exactly that and was one of the most gratifying experiences of my life."

**To learn more about hosting a community fundraiser, please connect with Leanna at [SmashnukL@operationeyesight.com](mailto:SmashnukL@operationeyesight.com).**

## Get in touch



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