



With his sight restored, Milan has been able to return to work at the tea estate. Through the generosity of donors like you, he has regained his independence and is now able to support his four children.

A father's livelihood and hope restored

The ancient art of 'tea plucking' requires the picker to identify and pluck only the freshest, newest shoots on the tea plant. It requires dexterity, speed and, most importantly, excellent eyesight.

So, imagine trying to pick tea efficiently when your eyes are clouded over with cataracts.

This was the situation for 36-year-old Milan, who lives at the Nahorjan Tea Estate in Assam, India.

He had worked as a tea picker for years before his vision started to fade. When his wife passed away suddenly, he was left alone to support their four young children. Shortly after, his eyesight reduced so much that he was able to detect little more than hand movement in front of his eyes.

Robbed of his ability to work, Milan and his children moved in with his father, leaving the burden of supporting the family on the aging grandfather.

"Assam tea is the best tea in the world, but while plucking the tea, the workers have more exposure to sunlight," says our local project manager, Tapobrat Bhuyan. "Sadly, long hours of exposure to solar radiation can contribute to the early development of cataracts."

Hope arrived for Milan in February when he attended a screening camp at the tea estate, which we had organized along with our local partner, Chandraprabha Eye Hospital.

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Milan was among the dozens of tea plantation workers who received eye health screening. He was diagnosed with cataracts and scheduled for surgery, free of charge.

Days later, the hospital sent a bus to collect Milan and other patients, to transport them for their surgeries in the nearby city of Jorhat. Milan underwent phacoemulsification surgery – a modern technique that is considered the gold standard in cataract removal because it reduces recovery time – on both eyes.

About a month later, Milan was back at work, picking tea. He's grateful that he can once again support his family. Thanks to the compassion of our partners and donors like you, he and his children have hope for a brighter future.



Before his sight-restoring surgery, Milan's father (right) had to lead him by the hand to the clinic because Milan (left) could not see well enough to walk on his own.

A passion for care and community



Our global team of more than 2,000 community health workers is our first point of contact with many communities. That's why they need to have the right mix of training and passion.

For 37-year-old Felicia from Obrachire, in southern Ghana, seeing how prescription eyeglasses made it possible for her own daughter to read helped fuel her passion for delivering eye care in her community.

"Due to my daughter's story, I really love to screen schoolchildren, so I can help identify the eye conditions they may be having and assist them before it becomes too late," she says.

Eye health is often the missing piece of a much larger puzzle when it comes to overall health. Felicia says her eye health training has transformed the care she provides to her neighbours.

"I find satisfaction in detecting eye problems in people and assisting them to get the treatment they need."

Felicia works as a community health nurse, and since receiving additional training in primary eye care, she now provides eye health screenings, education and referrals for people in her own community.

"I can now give my community members an in-depth education on eye health when I go for home visits," she explains. "I love to see people in good health. I am passionate about helping the sick to recover."

Thank you for your compassion and dedication, Felicia!



Dinah's free reading glasses have not only alleviated her constant headaches and allowed her to read her Bible once again, but also enabled her to return to her favourite activity – reading to her granddaughters!

No headaches, thanks to new reading glasses

Dinah, a retired teacher from Kenya, says some of her best memories include the 'ah-ha!' moment when a student realized they could read and write. Now retired, she looks forward to the evenings when she reads to her granddaughters, passing knowledge between generations.

"It's an honour to share my passion for teaching with the girls," she explains. "Though there was a time when I couldn't do that. It broke my heart."

For six long months, Dinah experienced debilitating headaches that hindered her from reading to the girls.

Luckily, a community health worker visited Dinah's home and referred her to Iten County Referral Hospital, where we recently established an eye unit in collaboration with the County Government of Elgeyo-Marakwet and the Ministry of Health.

Dinah was diagnosed with presbyopia and received a complimentary pair of reading glasses. In 2022, we distributed nearly 4,300 pairs of prescription eyeglasses through our Kenya programs.

"I'll admit, I was reluctant to start reading again," Dinah says. "Once I did, I realized I had nothing to worry about – my headaches were gone!"

Let's celebrate World Sight Day 2023

Thursday, October 12 is World Sight Day. This year, we're joining the global eye health community in reminding everyone, everywhere of the importance of loving your eyes at work – whether you work indoors or outdoors, on a computer or at home caring for children.

Visit operationeyesight.com/worldsightday for eye health resources, including eye health tips sheets for employers and staff, and a colouring page for the kids!

Thanks to the generosity of our partners and donors, these students now have access to clean, fresh water. This in turn has helped improved school attendance.

Photo: Zenegnaw Adimtew / Partners in Education Ethiopia

Healthy students, healthy futures

Every parent wants their child to be safe, happy and healthy at school – Abichikili Secondary School is no exception.

It's one of five schools across Ethiopia's regional state of Amhara where the attendance rate for girls decreases each year due to inaccessibility of clean water and bathroom facilities.

"Students had to walk for more than 15 minutes to get water from surrounding households. Many would not return to classes after that," says the school's principal, Yingesu Meshobiaw. "In the past, when girls felt that their period was setting in, they used to jump over fences and go home for lack of facilities."

In 2022, in partnership with Partners in Education Ethiopia and the Peter Gilgan Foundation, we launched a Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) program at Abichikili and four other primary and secondary schools in the state, bringing locally-accessible water to more than 9,000 students.

The project has also helped improve school attendance, particularly among girls, who make up more than half of the student population. Before the project, upwards of 10 students were absent from class for a full week each month, often falling behind in class.



"Water access is vital for everyone. Water sources on school grounds allow for community gardens, which promote a different kind of learning and responsibility of nutrition – for students and adults alike," Yingesu adds.

Local access to fresh water allows people to wash their hands, faces and clothing, which helps prevent the transmission of diseases, including blinding trachoma, which is a major cause of vision loss across sub-Saharan Africa.

Our teams took a variety of approaches to bring water to the schools, including drilling boreholes to access groundwater, digging trenches and installing water supply lines, and setting up storage tanks, faucets and appropriate drainage.

Faculty and community members received training to maintain their water infrastructure and test water quality. Twenty-one female teachers also received menstrual hygiene training including how to create reusable sanitary pads using local materials.

"Having a water supply line has changed our school for the better," Yingesu says. "Girls started using the facility the day it opened, and attendance rates have increased tremendously."

Audrey Wilson worked as an environmental education teacher throughout her career and has had a lifelong passion for helping others, including animals and birds. She's been donating to Operation Eyesight since our early days and still gives today because she's seen our impact first-hand.



A lifetime of generosity

Audrey Wilson, 88, first learned about Operation Eyesight from an uncle who attended a talk given by Dr. Ben Gullison, whose work in Sompeta, India inspired Art Jenkyns to start our organization in 1963.

"Nearly six decades ago, that meeting planted seeds that have grown into a lifetime of giving," Audrey recalls. "It was one of the first charities I gave to, and I still give today."

Audrey's passion for supporting our mission eventually led her to travel to India in 2000 with Dr. Gullison's daughter, Marilyn Gullison, who had spent much of her childhood in Sompeta.

"We travelled across the country in what looked like a school bus to many different hospitals and surgical camps where Operation Eyesight's work was in action," Audrey says. "We saw patients being picked up and transported to their procedures and even observed a cataract surgery."





Audrey says the journey to India left a lasting impact on her.

"Great compassion and commitment was shown by all," she says. "Operation Eyesight is still doing great work, and that's why I continue to give."

Learn more about Operation Eyesight's history at operationeyesight.com/60years.

Thank you for your incredible support, Audrey!

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