



Sightsavers and OneSight partner to serve The Gambia Global Vision Charities to provide vision care for 80,000 in need

LONDON (UK) and CINCINNATI (OH), 2 December 2010— Two global vision charities are joining forces to provide access to essential vision care in The Gambia. **Sightsavers International** and **OneSight** today announced a three-year partnership beginning in 2011 designed to reach 80,000 patients with sustainable vision care. The program aligns with The Gambia National Eye Care Programme¹ which delivers primary, secondary and tertiary level eye care services to its population.

A Sightsavers study² estimates that more than 354,000 people in The Gambia are affected by Refractive Error (blurred vision) and more than 163,000 need spectacles each year. The study cites several key reasons for the high number of untreated vision problems in this West African country: underfunding for eye care services, lack of trained health care professionals, the high cost of optical equipment and a general lack of awareness that poor eye sight can be improved with proper treatment.

The main goals of the partnership are:

1. To strengthen the existing primary eye care centres.
2. To establish two local optical workshops, including community screening for refractive errors and referrals to the secondary eye care units for further treatment.
3. To establish three self-screening vision centres in strategic locations in each of the five administrative regions in the country.

As part of the program, Sightsavers and OneSight will also provide training for two local optometrists and 12 optometric technicians to help serve The Gambia and surrounding region.

According to the World Health Organization³, Uncorrected Refractive Error is the second leading cause of avoidable blindness. There are 45 million people in the world who are blind, yet 75 percent of blindness is preventable or curable.

"We are very proud to partner with one of the most important charities in the eye care world," said Greg Hare, Executive Director of OneSight. "Combining Sightsavers' knowledge and established presence in countries where it operates with OneSight's commitment to improve vision for those in need will help The Gambian government provide sustainable refractive services."

Dr. Caroline Harper, Chief Executive of Sightsavers added: "Our partnership with OneSight will enable us to further our goal of a world where no one is blind from avoidable causes. The services that will be developed in The Gambia over the next few years will benefit so many people, enabling them to have their vision restored and to live independent and productive lives."

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¹ The Gambia National Eye Care Programme (NECP) was established in 1986 after a national epidemiological survey of blindness and eye diseases. The programme is now 24 years has a national coverage and is delivering primary, secondary and tertiary level eye care service to its population.

² Regional Summary Workshop in Guinea Bissau, conducted by Dr. Hasan Minto, 2008.

³ www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/86/1/07-041210.pdf

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About OneSight:

OneSight, a Luxottica Foundation, is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization in the U.S., dedicated to improving vision for those in need worldwide through outreach, research and education. Since 1988, OneSight outreach efforts have helped more than seven million people around the world see more clearly. OneSight research and education efforts have granted millions towards research and education. Luxottica Group, a global leader in eyewear, provides inspiration for OneSight and it is the organization's main sponsor.

For more information: www.onesight.org

About Sightsavers:

1. The U.S. Sight Savers International organization, established in 2000, is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. It is affiliated with Sightsavers International, a group of organizations working with partners to eliminate avoidable blindness and promote equality of opportunity for disabled people in the developing world.
2. Sightsavers International is a registered UK charity (Registered charity numbers 207544 and SC038110)
3. There are 45 million blind people in the world; 75% of all blindness can be prevented or cured.
4. Every sixty seconds another child loses their sight; only 2% of children who are disabled in the developing world attend school
5. 2010 marks the 60th anniversary of Sightsavers International, originally called the Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind, which was founded in 1950 by the late Sir John Wilson.
6. In the six decades since its foundation, Sightsavers International has:
 - Treated over 206.8 million people for blinding and potentially blinding conditions
 - Carried out over 7.1 million operations to restore sight
 - Trained almost 0.5 million primary eye care workers
 - Carried out rehabilitation training to 91,000 people

For more information: <http://www.sightsaversusa.org/default.html>