



Vision Aid Overseas

30th Anniversary

Background

Our vision is a world in which everyone has access to eye care and spectacles

Our mission is to fight poverty by transforming access to eye care service for people in developing countries. We do this by utilising the expertise of volunteers to establish Vision Centres, train eye care workers and developing community-based eye care service

Our focus is uncorrected refractive error and primary eye health

We were founded in 1985

Vision Aid Overseas is a member of the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness and a stakeholder in the global initiative for the elimination of avoidable blindness, VISION 2020



Key Facts

The total global prevalence of **Uncorrected Refractive Error (URE)** is estimated to be **670 million people**

- 517 million uncorrected presbyopia
- 153 million uncorrected myopia / hypermetropia / astigmatism

85% of people who are visually impaired because they cannot get the glasses they need live in low- and middle-income countries, where there is

- **A lack of trained eye care professionals**
- **Inequality** of service provision – particularly in rural areas
- A **high cost** of eye care and spectacles in the private sector

Consequences

13 million children risk missing their education because of URE

45 million people who need spectacles are of working age

Women account for two-thirds of the people who are visually impaired

It is estimated that URE accounts for \$269 billion of lost productivity globally every year

Where we Work

- Botswana
- Burkina Faso
- Ethiopia
- Ghana
- Sierra Leone
- Zambia

Professional Volunteers

1. Training and skills sharing

- Faculty
- Supervision and mentoring
- Continuing education
- Training primary eye care providers

2. Vision Centre development

3. Strengthening community-based eye care delivery – Outreach projects

Why did I Volunteer?

- A chance to contribute my skills to a worthwhile cause and see some of the benefits first-hand, rather than just donating a sum of money to a charity
- Something I “had to do”: a unique experience which would improve my skills and knowledge



What is it Really Like on a Project

- IT IS NOT A HOLIDAY!
- One of the most rewarding, memorable, incredible experiences I have ever had.
- Meet like-minded people (colleagues and patients) and forming lasting friendships
- Challenge and surprise yourself at your ability to adapt and work under difficult conditions
- Make some of the stresses of work back home seem trivial and manageable!

Conclusions

Uncorrected refractive error is a global health care challenge

Raising awareness and funds to increase service activity is a priority for
Vision Aid Overseas

- Infrastructure
- Human Resources
- Patient impact

Human Resource Development must be a key focus

Vision Aid Overseas provides expertise and passion

How Can you Become a Volunteer?

- Become a member of VAO
 - £36.00 annual membership fee
- Attend a 1 - 2 day training course
- Give Head Office a list of your preferred dates (mostly two-week assignments) and project types (outreach, training, vision centre set-up, a mixture of the above)

Would you be Prepared to Volunteer on a Project?

- Vision Aid Overseas are looking at new ways to encourage members of our profession to join up and volunteer on projects.
- On the back of your CET Feedback form there is a section with some questions about VAO.
- If you have any time at the end of the day, I would really appreciate some feedback and ideas on how VAO can encourage new or repeat volunteers – what are the barriers that may prevent you from taking part?
 - Inexperience? Fear? Time? Money? Other?
 - Any and all suggestions are welcome, the more detail the better!
- Please feel free to talk to me during the break if you would like to know more

• **THANK YOU FOR LISTENING!**