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11 November 2016

Dear Nicky

I am pleased to be getting in touch with an update from Sightsavers for the Trustees of the Sandhu Charitable Foundation. Thank you so much for the kind support given through the Foundation this year.

Looking back on 2016 we have seen some incredible landmarks, including completing the largest infectious disease mapping exercise in history – the global trachoma mapping project. Thanks to the dedication of our partners and staff in country, we are also on target to have performed over 300,000 sight-saving operations and delivered 55 million treatments for blinding ‘neglected tropical diseases’ by the end of the year.

We are proud to share an update here, showing the impact your donations have had over 2016 in the countries where we work. From Criscent in Uganda, to Mahmoud in Ghana, we introduce you to just some of those whose lives and communities are being transformed with your support.

Our ‘A Million Miracles’ campaign is now in full flow and entering its final phase, with nearly 650,000 sight-saving operations funded so far ([www.millionmiracles.org](http://www.millionmiracles.org)).

**As a boost towards this goal, we are delighted to announce that a long-time supporter has offered to match all donations given by charitable trusts to Sightsavers’ work between now and the end of the year, up to a total of £40,000.**

Thank you once again for the trustees’ generosity. Should you have any questions about Sightsavers’ work, please do not hesitate to contact me on 01444 446658 or [jnichols@sightsavers.org](mailto:jnichols@sightsavers.org).

With very best wishes for the festive season and a prosperous year ahead,



Jim Nichols  
Trust Manager  
Sightsavers

**If you would like to change how you hear from us in the future, please get in touch on 01444 446 600**

## Changing lives with your support in 2016

Thank you so much for your support of Sightsavers, helping to change the lives of millions of people in some of the poorest communities in the developing world. With your support, we are on track to have examined over 11 million people for eye conditions, carried out over 300,000 sight saving operations and delivered over 55 million treatments for blinding neglected tropical diseases by the end of the year.

2016 has already seen some incredible landmarks - We **completed the global trachoma mapping project** - the largest infectious disease survey ever undertaken - led by Sightsavers to help eliminate this blinding disease for good. We also **exited Sri Lanka** - having reaching the point where we could move on, leaving behind a legacy of functioning eye care services. We also marked our **50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of preventing avoidable blindness in India**.

Over the year we have seen first-hand how your support for our work changes lives for the better. There's more than can fit into these few pages, but join us here as we journey from East to West Africa, showing the very real difference being made, thanks to you.

### Changing lives in Uganda: Criscent

Through our 'Million Miracles campaign', we aim to raise enough to deliver one million sight-saving operations by the end of 2017. Your support here restores life opportunities and livelihoods to those who have lost them through preventable blindness.

Earlier this year, in Uganda, we met six-year-old Criscent. His life has been transformed by a sight-restoring cataract operation.



### Eliminating river blindness in Ghana: Mahmoud

This year is also an exciting time for Sightsavers work to eliminate river blindness, with a number of countries approaching their target dates for seeing the end of this debilitating disease.

We visited one community in Ghana where river blindness had previously been rife, to see the hope and very real difference being made by treating this blinding disease.



### After Ebola in Sierra Leone: how far we've come

Over 2014 and 2015, Sierra Leone was devastated by an Ebola outbreak that claimed the lives of at least 3,500 people. Over half of those who survived the disease were left with eye problems. Our team in Sierra Leone has been helping support these survivors and our CEO Caroline Harper visited Sierra Leone recently to see how things have changed since the outbreak.



**This year, your support has helped to restore and protect the sight of millions of people in some of the world's poorest countries. Working together, we can reach even more people and communities in 2017.**



## Changing lives in Uganda: six-year-old Criscent

In July of this year, the BBC featured the moving story of Criscent, a six-year old boy from Uganda whose life has been changed through your generosity and the funds raised through our 'Million Miracles' campaign.

Criscent Bwambale is a six-year old from western Uganda. For the first six years of his life Criscent was one of 18 million people in the developing world estimated to be living with preventable blindness. He was born with cataracts in both eyes, only able to make out vague areas of dark and light.

Criscent lives with his grandmother in a mud-built house, surrounded by cocoa plantations. His sight loss meant almost total exclusion from everyday life; he could not go to school or play with other children his age, and had to rely on his family for even the most basic tasks.

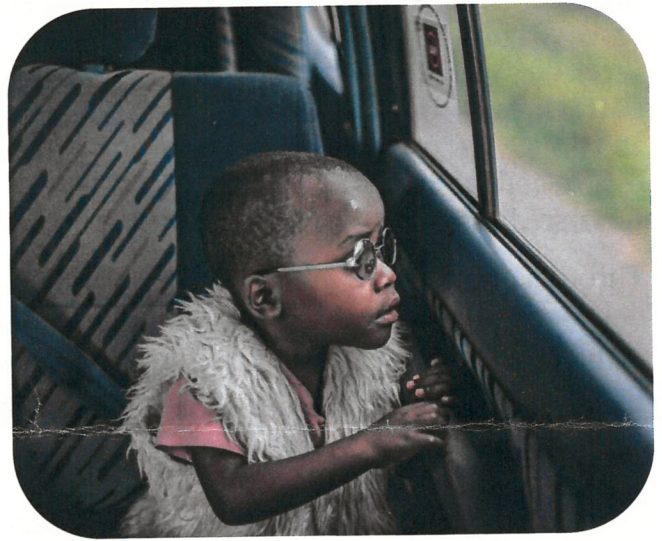


Before surgery, he was unable to see your face. The only sign of him recognising any movement was when an eye-care worker shone a torch into his eyes during his final checks prior to surgery.

His face smiled in delight to see light and movement, enough to be able to reach out in the direction of the torch. Criscent expressed excitement about his surgery to his grandmother, unusual for such a young child.

We asked him what he hoped for after his surgery - he responded simply by saying 'more light'. After another moment's thought, he added he'd like to "learn to play football".

Thanks to Sightsavers' work and your support, Criscent was lucky enough to receive cataract surgery in both eyes at a local hospital. Two months later, he went back at the hospital to be fitted with glasses, allowing him to see the world clearly for the very first time.



*On the journey back home from hospital, Criscent looks out of the car window with amazement.*

Back home, he is already showing signs of becoming a confident and independent little boy. His family now have the task of teaching him the names of the everyday objects he can now see. "His siblings are all happy and excited. They are all elated that their brother can see," said his grandmother.

This is just one of the life changing operations made possible by your support. On behalf of all those whose sight is restored because of your generosity, thank you!

**We hope you can join us to reach many more like Criscent, restoring sight and opening up many new opportunities. You can see more on his story, and those of many others, on our million miracles campaign website: <http://www.millionmiracles.org/people/>.**



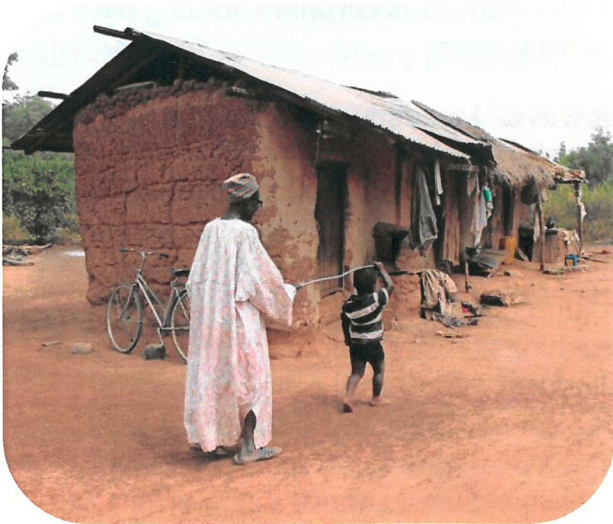
## Eliminating river blindness in Ghana: Mahmoud

**We visited Asubende in Ghana to see the impact that Sightsavers' work distributing treatments for the neglected tropical disease, river blindness is having in communities. Here we met Mahmoud...**

Mahmoud is 75 years old and lives in Asubende, a small community on the banks of the Pru river in Ghana. The main activities here are fishing and farming, and the fertile land around the river is key to the community's survival.

However, with the river comes the risk of river blindness. Six people in the community are blind from the disease, including Mahmoud. The threat of blindness has been so severe here that many uprooted their families and moved to new lands further away from the river.

**"Before I was blind, I farmed, but when I became blind I couldn't take care of my farm anymore. Now I live with my brother's son and his wife and children.**



**I have many hopes for the children in my family but I'm afraid for them".**

Thankfully, there is hope. There have been no new cases of river blindness in Asubende for many years, and all those who are blind from the disease are over 50.

This is down to a local Community Drug Distributor (CDD) named Mary. She works with Sightsavers to ensure everyone in Asubende receives their annual dose of the treatment that keeps river blindness at bay.



**"I always give thanks for Mary, our CDD. I don't have any money to give her but I always say thank you to her."**

With these continued annual treatments, it is only a matter of time before river blindness is gone completely from Asubende, and from Ghana.

This story of change is one of many playing out in communities across Africa, thanks to the hard work of dedicated volunteers like Mary, and your support. In 2016 we are on the brink of eliminating river blindness in Mali, Chad and Kenya. As Mahmoud put it:

**"To the people who support Sightsavers, I would say God bless you for what you have been doing for us. I want you to know that I want treatment to continue."**

**Please help us continue our mission to eliminate river blindness by 2025. With treatment costing just 7p for one person – a whole community can be protected for £28. Find out more at:**

**<http://www.sightsavers.org/what-we-do/sight/>**



## From our CEO - after Ebola in Sierra Leone: how far we've come

In September this year, our CEO Caroline Harper visited Sierra Leone to see how the country is faring now it has been declared Ebola-free, and in particular to find out how Sightsavers staff and partners were coping.

At Kenema hospital, four hours' drive from the capital city, Freetown, there stands a monument to the 34 health workers who lost their lives during the Ebola crisis in Sierra Leone. It is a sobering reminder of the bravery shown during those terrible times.

At least 3,500 people died from Ebola in Sierra Leone – probably many more than that. Over 4,000 survived having the virus, but it left its mark. As many as 60 per cent have a potentially blinding eye condition called 'uveitis'.

I had not forgotten speaking to our Country Director, Nancy Smart, when the crisis was at its height. At that time a sick child was no longer cuddled and comforted but put into a separate room while parents hoped and prayed it was a common fever. Malaria, a dreadful killer itself, was suddenly greeted with relief that it was not Ebola.

I don't think we will ever really understand what it was like for our staff through those awful days – but I would like to honour their bravery and determination. Earlier this year, Nancy herself (pictured right) was honoured by the President of Sierra Leone in recognition of Sightsavers' support to the people of Sierra Leone during the outbreak.



Ebola took hold here because of a weak health system. The loss of so many health workers has damaged it further, but by how much, and is it recovering?

Sierra Leone now has 90 eye health workers (to support a population of around 6.4 million people). More than 80 were trained with support from Sightsavers, and more are on the way, but a shortage of eye health workers is certainly holding back the health system.

However, I met several health workers determined to build up eye care services – including support for those Ebola survivors struggling with uveitis. We also have in place a network of highly dedicated volunteer community drug distributors, reaching across the country to treat river blindness (along with other neglected tropical diseases). We hope to hit the target of eliminating that particular blinding disease in Sierra Leone next year...

**Thank you so much for your generous support.** We hope you can continue to partner with us in 2017, helping to save and restore sight for many more people and ensure equality for those living with blindness and other disabilities in the countries where we work.

**We are very pleased to announce that a long-time supporter of Sightsavers has offered to match all donations given by charitable trusts in support of our work, from now until the end of the year, up to a total of £40,000.**

We would be delighted if you can help us to make the most of this opportunity, with the impact of any donation you make effectively being doubled during that time.