

MEDIA RELEASE

Free eye care services help 20,000 people in Tanzania

20 September, 2018, Mwanza, Lake Zone, Tanzania: Recent celebrations launched a new eye care project which will bring free eye services to more than 20,000 people in the Lake Zone. In its quest to accelerate eye care services to more people in more locations, Brien Holden Vision Institute is collaborating with the Tanzanian-born Dr Moes Nasser and Optometry Giving Sight to implement a new initiative known as Lake Zone Roshanali Nasser's Outreach Project.

Dr Moes Nasser was born in Nyambiti and grew up in Bariadi District and later relocated to America to qualify as an optometrist, and the new project is launched in memory of his father, the Late Roshanali Nasser. Indebted to the community where he was born and raised, Dr Nasser aims to give back to his origin by honouring his late father who held a life-long commitment to the wellbeing of the Simiyu and Nyambiti Communities.

"I have been fortunate with my life opportunity and with my profession as a doctor of optometry and all it has helped me experience. I've never tired of the joy I see in people eyes when they can see clearly, especially after a long time of leading a life with diminished vision," said Dr Nasser when asked about his motivations for funding the new project. "Giving sight to people really does give back to humanity and in my profession it feels that way in every examination. I want to be able to extend this life giving service to the people in the communities of my youth."

The project aims to screen 14,000 primary school pupils from 14 project-adopted primary schools of Nyambiti ward, Bariadi District and a special school in Misungwi District. Outreach activities will also benefit more than 6000 people in the Lake Zone, bringing much needed free eye care services into the districts at community level.

The teachers in the 14 schools will be trained as vision screeners enabling them to with the knowledge screen the children's eyes. The project optometrists will examine and refract the children refereed by teachers, prescribe and dispense spectacles and low vision devices to the children with refractive error. The children with other eye conditions will be referred for further examination to the Bariadi and Mwanza Vision Centres or the Bugando Referral Hospital.

Lake Zone Roshanali Nasser's Outreach Project will also re-establish school health clubs, equipping them with eye health promotion materials, while placing vision corridors at each adopted school providing the ongoing capability at the schools to check children's vision for impairment.

Eden Mashayo, Program Manager for Tanzania, Brien Holden Vision Institute spoke positively about the launch of the new project. "With the new project supported generously by Dr Nasser and Optometry Giving Sight we are aiming to build on previous eye care initiatives we have implemented in the Lake Zone. We are grateful for the new opportunity to further develop local capacity by training teachers as vision screeners and create sustainability through the vision corridors and clubs. This project will also benefit people at the community level as we will reach many people through the mobile outreach activities and be able to provide them with much needed free eye care services."

Working closely in partnership with the Tanzanian Government, Brien Holden Vision Institute's focus on child eye health instigated action in 2012 to start a school eye health program in Coast Region; Kibaha TC, Mkuranga, Kibaha Rural and Bagamoyo districts. From 2013 to 2016 a four-year child eye health program successfully screened more than 1.4 million children in 13 districts and three regions of Tanzania; Mbeya, Mwanza and Songwe Regions.

Concurrently, in 2014-2015 the Institute implemented the Vision Champion Project in Simiyu Region to evaluate a Child-to-Child eye health approach as a means to increase awareness and eye health services uptake. This project increased eye health seeking behaviour by the target community by more than 80%.

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About Brien Holden Vision Institute: We believe sight is a fundamental right for everyone, everywhere. Our mission is to develop new solutions for vision care and eliminate vision impairment and avoidable blindness, thereby reducing poverty and suffering. We are a global non-profit, non-governmental organisation who since 1998 has delivered sustainable eye care services, education and training programs in over 50 countries, providing eye care to over 14 million people at more than 400 eye care sites and training 250,000 eye care personnel.

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