Highlights

Our Ghana team mobilized a group of senior Ghanaian eye health professionals and with their input, have now published the first Ghana Primary Eye Care Training Manual, with a foreword from Ghana’s Minister for Health, the Hon. Kwaku Agyeman-Manu.

Our School Vision Screening and Eye Health Awareness Raising Programme in Central Region kicked off to a fantastic start. Since 1st October 12,421 children and teachers have been vision screened.

October also saw the release of the World Health Organization’s long-awaited World Report on Vision. The report’s key proposal is to integrate and scale up ‘people-centred eye care’, embedded in health systems and based on strong primary health care, a model which VFAN has championed since 2011, in Rwanda and Ghana.

Our ambition in Ghana

4,000 nurses trained in Primary Eye Care

1 million people vision screened

100,000 reading glasses dispensed

150,000 people referred for prescription glasses, surgery or other treatments

500,000 eye drops dispensed
Latest News

World Sight Day 2019 fell during our school screening programme in Agona West District. VFAN marked it by working in the community to: increase access to eye care, identify and treat sight problems among school children and raise eye health awareness among young people and teachers at Swedru Methodist B School (pictured).

In the Press

Our nurse training model was featured in an episode of the BBC’s *50 Things That Made the Modern Economy* podcast series, entitled ‘Glasses’. Tim Harford considered how to correct the world’s vision and suggested people who have more easily fixable eye problems could be served by non-specialist health workers. He highlighted research findings that the nurses we trained in Rwanda to do sight checks did them well, over 90% of the time. Have a listen to the free [podcast](https://www.bbc.com) and read the BBC News article: *Why do billions of people still not have glasses?*

Coming up… this Christmas

This year VFAN will again be participating in The Big Give’s *Christmas Challenge*, the UK’s biggest online match funding campaign. Between 12pm (midday) on **Tuesday 3rd December** and 12pm on **Tuesday 10th December**, online donations made via our ‘[Innovative Eye Care for Children in Ghana](https://biggive.co.uk)' page will be doubled!

Please do consider donating during this festive giving initiative, as it is a wonderful chance to maximise the impact of your support and help us to bring clear vision to schools and communities in Ghana.

Check out our campaign page [here](https://biggive.co.uk)!

Coming up… in 2020

We are pleased to announce that [our School Vision Screening and Eye Health Awareness Programme is set to commence in Upper East Region (UER) in early 2020](https://biggive.co.uk). UER is remote and largely marginalised in terms of health and education service provision, with poverty levels amongst the highest nationally. The region has (a) no Ghana Health Service (GHS) ophthalmologist; (b) no localised provision of glasses; and (c) inadequate as well as poor distribution of human resources for eye health.

The project baseline study found that knowledge among school children and teachers of eye health conditions, their causes and how to prevent eye diseases and trauma was low, although knowledge of visual impairment (VI) was relatively higher. The nurse training, school screening and awareness programme we will soon be implementing therefore seeks to improve these weaknesses in eye care service provision and awareness as a matter of urgency.
Ghana Programme Latest

School Vision Screening & Eye Health Awareness

Development of the Ghana Primary Eye Care (PEC) Training Manual and Trainees Handbook is now complete. This was a collaborative effort by a working group of eye health professionals, commissioned by Vision for a Nation (VFAN). The manual and handbook were adapted from the World Health Organization for Africa’s (WHO-AFRO) PEC Training Manual, and contextualised for the Ghana context.

The publication of these two key resources was the crucial first step towards the establishment of a quality, widely accessible Primary Eye Care service in Ghana. They were presented by VFAN’s CEO and Chair of the Board of Trustees to the Director-General of the Ghana Health Service, Dr Anthony Nsiah-Asare, in Accra on 6th November.

Ghana Health Service nurses are now being trained in PEC by the VFAN Eye Health Team in cohorts of 18, one from each of the 5 districts in Central Region in which we work.

Our 5 - 7 Year Plan in Ghana

PHASE 1

A 3-year nurse training, school eye health awareness and screening programme in Central Region, Upper East Region and Upper West Region.

PHASE 2

Support the Ghana Health Service (GHS) to strengthen all levels of Ghana’s eye care services nationwide.

PHASE 3

A managed exit from Ghana, leaving the GHS fully responsible for, and capable of, managing PEC services.

The first cohort of trained nurses from Agona West have now delivered school screenings and awareness raising sessions at 33 schools across the district, achieving:

- Children screened: 11,922
- Teachers screened: 499
- Eye health awareness received: 12,421
- Glasses dispensed: 104
- Eye drops dispensed: 916

The second cohort of nurses, who practise in Abura-Asebu-Kwamankese (AAK) District, are scheduled to attend the VFAN 3-day Primary Eye Care training course in January 2020. School screenings and awareness raising will follow in AAK in February and March 2020.
Ghana Team Member Profile

Reina Der – Monitoring and Reporting Lead

Reina, who joined the team in July, has a Master’s in Public Health and over 7 years of experience in public health interventions such as HIV/AIDS and hypertension. Her previous work has included project design, health management information systems (HMIS) development, programme monitoring and evaluation, and capacity building implementing partners. She has also been involved in field coordination, national health insurance systems and digital health projects in resource-constrained settings.

“The opportunity to set up a monitoring and reporting system from scratch for a field (Primary Eye Care) in which I had no experience, was a welcoming challenge and my motivation for accepting my role in VFAN. So far it has been a huge learning curve and a great experience. I have enjoyed the support of a great team and I look forward to sharing the results of our work, in Ghana and across the world.”

Vision Screening at the Swedru Salvation Army School for the Deaf

This school was not selected for our vision screening programme by the district authorities but happens to be in the same compound as two other schools which were. However, the VFAN team and GHS nurses felt it would not be ethical to provide screening to the children in the two mainstream schools but leave out the children attending the School for the Deaf.

There were not enough teachers at the school to help supervise the session on the day, but the nurses were still determined to screen them. They decided to learn the basic sign language which would enable them to communicate sufficiently with the pupils. By the end of the session, 88 pupils had been successfully vision screened, and 3 were referred for secondary care.

The school’s headteacher said ‘…we are very grateful that you did not deny our hearing-impaired children this eye screening service, we thank you’.