Highlights

Our Ghana team have expanded our Primary Eye Care (PEC) programme into the Upper East Region. Working closely with the local authorities, the Eye Health Team have already trained 45 nurses in PEC and commenced a region-wide awareness campaign.

Our School Vision Screening and Eye Health Awareness Raising Programme in Central Region continues apace. A further 18 nurses have been trained, and 11,202 children and teachers screened.

We thank the continued generosity of our supporters for their contributions to another successful Christmas Challenge fundraising campaign. We are also thinking of all the partners, communities and health professionals we work with during these difficult and uncertain times and thank them for their hard work and resilience.

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

We were thrilled to join the Vision for the Commonwealth coalition, the Countess of Wessex and our founder James Chen at St James’ Palace in February. The coalition launched the fantastic #GlassesinClasses campaign, which aims to get sight tests, affordable glasses and other treatments to all school children in the Commonwealth by 2030. Read James’ full report here.

The UK team were excited to welcome the Ghana team to London in early March, for a week of ‘One VFAN’ team building, strategic programme planning and the chance to consolidate our joint ways of working together.

Like many organisations all over the world, we too are facing disruption to our programmes as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and are working closely with our stakeholders to adapt where necessary. We would like to send our best wishes and solidarity to all our supporters and partners across the sector.

Thank you for your support!

A big thank you from the VFAN team to all our supporters and match funders for your generous donations to our Innovative Eye Care for Children in Ghana campaign, during The Big Give’s Christmas Challenge back in December.

We raised a fantastic £30,755 from 75 online donations, two very generous match funders and Gift Aid in just one week! These funds will help us get #GlassesinClasses in schools in the Upper East Region, where we plan to train 120 nurses in Primary Eye Care to vision screen and deliver eye health awareness sessions to at least 30,000 children and teachers over the next two years.

Tony’s Ultra X Marathon Challenge

16 years after running the Marathon des Sables – “The Toughest Footrace on Earth” – VFAN CEO Tony Hulton has again decided to test his endurance skills. He has dusted off his trainers this winter and has been pounding the paths of London, Geneva and Colombo. All in preparation for running a 250km Ultra X, the distance of 6 marathons in 5 days, in the heat and hills of Sri Lanka.

The race was planned for late March, but unfortunately due to the coronavirus outbreak and associated travel restrictions, it had to be postponed. Tony was running with the aim of raising £10,000 to support our nationwide primary eye care programme in Ghana, as well vision screening projects in Sri Lanka. He will take part when it is rearranged or in next year’s edition – we will keep you updated! In the meantime, you can read more about Tony’s challenge on his Just Giving page.
Ghana Programme Latest

School Vision Screening & Eye Health Awareness

Our first steps along this journey to a sustainable and integrated Primary Eye Care (PEC) service in Ghana, are two school vision screening and eye health awareness raising programmes in collaboration with the Ghana Health Service (GHS) and the Ghana Education Service (GES). The goal is to improve eye health among school children and teachers in the region, by training GHS nurses in PEC and supporting them to deliver screenings at schools within their districts.

Earlier this year we opened a small regional office within existing government offices in Tongo, in Upper East Region (UER). Our new Regional Coordinator, Titus Alzumah, will be based there to support delivery of the UER project. In January, we trained 45 GHS nurses from the first 3 focus districts. VFAN PEC screening kits (see photo below) are distributed to each trained nurse, to enable the planned PEC screening at schools, and in health centres in future. In February, our innovative region-wide eye health promotion campaign and awareness raising activities commenced.

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.

In Central Region’s Abura-Asebu-Kwamankese (AAK) District, 15 nurses are now fully PEC-trained and have delivered screenings and awareness raising sessions at schools across the district. In February they achieved:

- Children screened: 10,737
- Teachers screened: 465
- Eye health awareness received: 11,202
- Glasses dispensed: 23 (in progress)
- Eye drops dispensed: 272

Schools in Ghana closed in Mid-March to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, but our team in Ghana are using this time to consolidate the learning gained from the first two rounds of screening, and prepare to kick off again as soon possible once restrictions are removed.
Ghana Team Member Profile

Charles Koduah – Eye Health Team Lead

Charles is an optometrist who joined VFAN in April 2019 with 7 years’ prior experience in Primary Eye Care. He holds an MSc in Public Health for Eye Care from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, where his dissertation title was the ‘Eye health needs of schoolteachers: the forgotten group in the school eye health programmes in the Brong Ahafo region.’ As the Head of the Eye Clinic at the St Elizabeth Catholic Hospital in Hwidiem, Ghana, Charles gained extensive experience in planning, organising and managing community and school outreach programmes.

“My role with VFAN gives me the opportunity to reach out to the poor and vulnerable needing eye care services, compared to the clinical setting. I have a great team who support and challenge me to bring out the best in me, and I strongly believe that together we can make local eye care services readily and easily accessible in Ghana.”

Spotlight: Bongo District Nurse Training

During the Bongo District PEC training course, the nurses were very interested to learn about how to construct and apply eye pads and shields. Motorbikes and bicycles are very common means of transportation in the Upper East Region; however, the use of crash helmets and protective gear is not widespread. This exposes many people to eye injuries and particles or objects entering their eyes.

In most cases, the practice has been that patients who present with eye injuries are referred to the secondary health facility but without the appropriate first aid, which can cause further complications. The nurses were eager to learn these skills, so that they will be able to offer their communities the right first aid before referring them, thereby reducing the incidence of complications.

Their enthusiasm and ability to grasp the concept within such a short time was so impressive and encouraging to the training facilitator, such that she requested a photo with her group. Congratulations to the Eye Health Team!