



LIGHT
FOR THE WORLD



Annual Report 2023



Dear friends and supporters,

Reflecting on my first full year at Light for the World, I am hugely thankful for you, our loyal supporters and trusted partners. Without your support, we would have been unable to make the significant impact we did in 2023 — sparking positive, long-lasting change in the communities we work alongside.

Working hand-in-hand with people with disabilities and their organisations, at Light for the World we aim for sustainable systems change, and mainstreaming of climate justice and gender equality in our work.

In 2023, Light for the World reached countless people to promote disability rights, inclusive education, and economic empowerment, including in emergencies, and access to eye health.

From supporting young people with disabilities into work, to promoting accessible humanitarian responses, I invite you to read on for a glimpse of our positive impact alongside expert partners.

The year was not without challenges. Conflicts took innocent lives and forced people from their homes. The effects of the climate crisis are becoming more intense, disproportionately affecting people with disabilities in lower-income countries. The global economy remains volatile, creating an uncertain funding environment for international NGOs. Still, I am proud to share many milestone moments and stories of progress from the past 12 months.

After years of advocacy by Light for the World and our partners, South Sudan took a historic step for disability rights by signing the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). We launched a first-of-its-kind Disability Inclusion Academy in Ethiopia. We kicked off We Can Work, a landmark programme in partnership with Mastercard Foundation and

African Disability Forum, to enhance employment for young Africans with disabilities. And we continued to save the sight of children and adults, reinforcing health systems in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Mozambique and Uganda. I am excited to share even more success stories in the following pages.

Internally, we have also made significant strides forward. Important organisational changes will make us stronger. We are progressing our Strategy 2030, to position Light for the World as a modern, agile organisation ready to thrive in the future.

Light for the World is only able to have the impact it does – positively changing the lives of millions – because of you. With your dedication and support, we can make a lasting impact and pave the way for a future where inclusivity and accessibility are woven into the fabric of every community.

Where disability rights are respected as human rights. Where quality eye health is available for everyone. And where every child can go to school, every adult can learn and earn, and no one is denied life-changing healthcare.

Together, we are stronger; thank you again.

Marion Lieser
CEO, Light for the World International

Who we are & why we act

Light for the World sparks lasting change on disability rights and eye health.

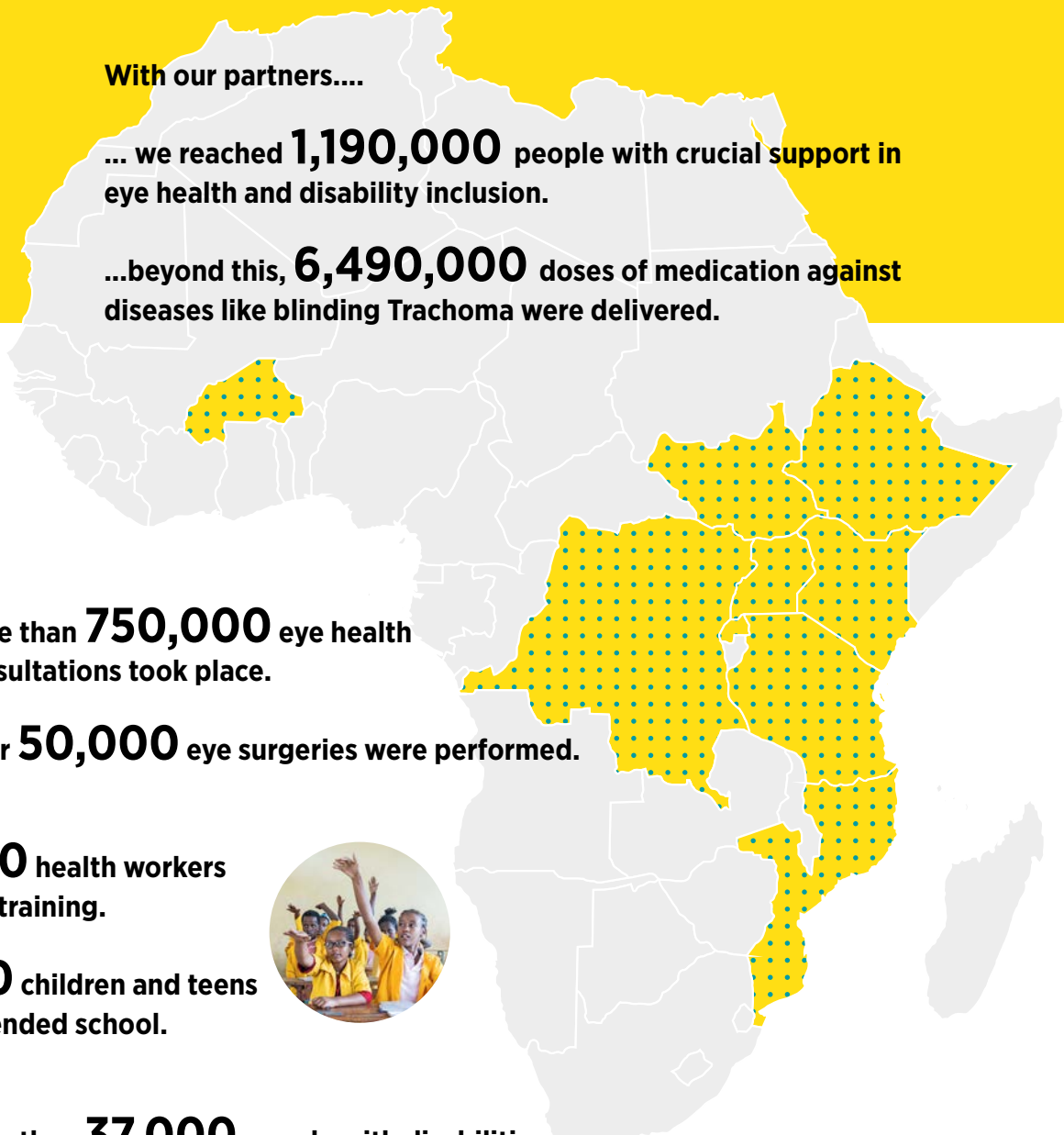
Our vision is a world where people with disabilities, and people with eye health conditions, fully exercise their rights to health, education, work and protection in emergencies.

Highlights 2023

With our partners....

... we reached **1,190,000** people with crucial support in eye health and disability inclusion.

...beyond this, **6,490,000** doses of medication against diseases like blinding Trachoma were delivered.



More than **750,000** eye health consultations took place.

Over **50,000** eye surgeries were performed.

More than **16,000** health workers received eye health training.

Close to **30,000** children and teens with disabilities attended school.



More than **37,000** people with disabilities took part in economic empowerment activities.

These figures show the activities of all Light for the World member organisations in 2023

Sparking lasting change

EYE HEALTH

Everyone has the right to quality eye care.



Our comprehensive, inclusive approach to improving eye health saved the sight of children and adults and helped reinforce health systems in 2023. We focus on regions where access to eye care is difficult. We facilitate eye services for children — with an increasing focus on girls — and people with and without disabilities, including those living in remote areas.

There are 1.1 billion people living with vision loss. Yet 90% of vision loss is preventable or treatable. We focus on sustainable solutions to improve eye health care services and contribute to overall strengthening of healthcare systems. A strong workforce of well-trained local health

professionals is essential to strengthen child eye health services and ensure they remain strong. So we provide scholarships for ophthalmology residents and subspecialisation training — including paediatric ophthalmology — for ophthalmologists, nurses and other allied staff. Light for the World also enables better access to treatment and surgeries and highlights how better child eye health improves educational attainment and strengthens the health system.

In 2023, we supported 56 Eye Health projects and our programmes screened 300,000 schoolchildren for eye problems. Our innovative 1,2,3 I can see! child eye health programme identified and supported pupils with eye problems and demonstrated the transformative power of glasses. We contributed to systems change in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Mozambique and Uganda. This included strengthening data collection in Mozambique, supporting specialised training of 16 eye health professionals in Burkina Faso and the adoption of school eye health into the teachers' curriculum in Uganda.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Every child has the right to education!

Yet children with disabilities are 49% more likely to have never attended school than children without disabilities. Denying children with disabilities their right to education has a lifelong impact on learning, achievement and employment opportunities. Inclusive education is when every child — including children with disabilities — is given the opportunity and support to learn in the same classroom. Inclusive education is proven to deliver better outcomes for all learners and is often cheaper to implement. By

removing barriers and accommodating diversity, it breaks the cycle of discrimination and benefits all children. At Light for the World, we facilitate equal access to inclusive education and accessible technology for learners with disabilities — including in humanitarian emergencies.



In 2023, we supported 37 different inclusive education projects. We offered girls and boys with and without disabilities the chance to

continue learning in Burkina Faso, where more than one in five schools has closed due to the presence of armed groups. We provided emergency humanitarian support and educational opportunities for internally displaced pupils. Our advocacy also saw the government in Burkina Faso establish specific measures for pupils with disabilities to use assistive devices during school exams and adaptation of educational

resources. We also joined the Education Cannot Wait programme, alongside Save the Children, to ensure crisis-affected girls and boys in South Sudan have uninterrupted access to inclusive education.

In 2024, we will launch critical new projects to ensure children, including those with disabilities, can continue learning in emergency situations.

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Everyone has the right to dignified and fulfilling work.

We promote Economic Empowerment working alongside NGO partners, governments and private sector organisations to support them to become disability inclusive. We advise on, and advocate for, disability inclusive policies and fully accessible workplaces. In 2023, we supported 44 different economic empowerment projects.

Our innovative approach to training Disability Inclusion Facilitators (DIFs) and Disability Inclusion Advisors (DIAs) went from strength to strength in 2023. Their work helped to foster inclusion in public, private and non-governmental organisations across our programme countries and beyond.

We also kicked off We Can Work in partnership with Mastercard Foundation and African Disability Forum, which will include a significant scale up of the DIF approach. We Can Work will provide employment opportunities for young Africans with disabilities in Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Ghana, Nigeria and Senegal. Throughout the year, we have worked with

Organisations of People with Disabilities (OPDs) and young people with disabilities to co-design an 8-year programme that will ensure lasting access to fulfilling work.

In Kenya, we provided business training to micro-entrepreneurs with disabilities. We also offered students with disabilities employment training to help them prepare for the future workforce.

In Ethiopia, we launched a Disability Inclusion Academy, where young people will be trained as DIFs. In Uganda, under the We Are Able! project and in collaboration with EnableMe, we launched a digital platform allowing organisations to connect, support and empower people with disabilities. As a partner in the SPARK programme, we supported people with disabilities to become fully engaged in economic agricultural activities.



AMPLIFYING VOICES

Light for the World's partners, colleagues & projects raised important advocacy calls and received a host of individual and programme awards. Here are some highlights:



When You Become Me, a ground-breaking movie about disability inclusion co-produced by Light for the World Uganda and Reach A Hand Uganda, earned a host of award nominations.

Elie Bagbila, our Head of Rights and Advocacy, was honoured with a Knight of the Order of Merit of Health and Social Action in Burkina Faso for "his great contributions in the field of disability".

Two Light for the World projects were awarded a prestigious international prize at the Zero Project Conference. One was for CapAble, an online resource platform giving universities

and tertiary education providers the power and knowledge to put disability inclusion into action. The other was for the UK Aid-funded Inclusive Futures project, led by Sightsavers, recognising our work collaborating with OPDs across inclusive education projects.

Our expert colleagues represented Light for the World at influential international events including:

Ambrose Murangira, Technical Director for Disability Inclusion at Light for the World, who spoke about climate justice and making the green transition inclusive of people with disabilities at COP28.

Geoffrey Wabulembo, our Medical Director for Eye Health and Neglected Tropical Diseases, shared learnings from Light for the World's surgical audits in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia and Mozambique thanks to IAPB at 2030 In Sight Live in Singapore.

Marion Lieser and David Whedbee, President of Light for the World USA, attended COSP16, alongside global disability advocates, to learn from and connect with national, regional and international experts, organisations and UN entities.

Mathilde Umuraza, our Expert on Gender and Gender Based Violence, presented on advancing a disability-inclusive feminist movement at the Women Deliver Conference 2023 in Kigali.

International media organisations, including Forbes, Deutsche Welle and Radio France Internationale, covered Light for the World projects and interviewed our expert colleagues.

HUMANITARIAN ACTION

We believe in the right to protection in emergencies.

People with disabilities are among the most excluded and forgotten in humanitarian responses to disasters and emergencies.

We work to ensure people with disabilities in times of crisis have an active say in how to manage disaster responses. Our humanitarian work includes working to address gender-based violence towards women with disabilities and making sure future responses to the climate crisis are fully inclusive.

We advocate for equal access to information, food, drinking water and sanitation facilities and provide psychosocial support. We promote detailed data collection in crisis situations, to record and address the needs of people with disabilities and improve the inclusivity of future responses.

In 2023, we supported 14 different humanitarian aid projects, including South Sudanese returnees and refugees with disabilities who fled the conflict in Sudan. We helped train partners and provided technical expertise to provide a disability-inclusive response and ensure the refugee camps were accessible.

We also organised medical referrals for children and adults with disabilities. In Tigray, Ethiopia, we resumed our work tackling Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs), including blinding trachoma. We held the first Mass Drug Administration (MDA) of treatment for trachoma since the end of the two-year conflict. And Light for the World's advocacy efforts materialised in Austria, where the government made a significant commitment to including people with disabilities in humanitarian assistance in their Humanitarian Aid Strategy.



A BIG **THANK YOU** to our partners and supporters!

Donors, Institutional Partners, Foundations

Austrian Development Cooperation | Blum | Croma-Pharma GmbH | Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs | Education Cannot Wait | The End Fund | Essilor International | ETHOS.Legal | Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer | Foundation L'OCCITANE | Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office UK | Global Affairs Canada | International Fund for Agricultural Development | International Labour Organisation | IKEA Foundation | Leopold Bachmann Stiftung | Mastercard Foundation | Merck Family Foundation | Novartis Pharma AG | OWP Brillen GmbH | PRANA Foundation | Standard Chartered Foundation | UEFA Foundation | UNESCO | UNHCR | UNICEF | USAID

Networks and Alliances

African Disability Forum (ADF) | Coalition for Clear Vision | CBR Global Network | College of Ophthalmology of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa (COECSA) | CONCORD European Confederation of NGOs working on sustainable development and international cooperation | DAISY Consortium | Enable Me Foundation | Enabling Education Network (EENET) | European Disability Forum (EDF) | Global Business and Disability Network | Global Campaign for Education (GCE) | Global Rehabilitation Alliance | Human Rights and Democracy Network (HRDN) | International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) | International Coalition for Trachoma Control (ICTC) | International Disability Alliance (IDA) | International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC) | International Ophthalmological Fellowship Foundation (IOFF) | RTI International with Funding from USAID | SeeYou Foundation | Save the Children | Sightsavers International | The END Fund | The SPECS Network | UK Aid | Women in Development WIDE | VSO



Our programme and advocacy work focuses on countries including Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, South Sudan and Uganda. Our impact is made possible through generous donations and powerful partnerships from these countries as well as Light for the World member organisations in Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Germany, Switzerland, UK and USA.

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