



Lions Clubs  
International  
Foundation

# SIGHTFIRST: LIONS' VISION FOR ALL

## *Executive Summary*



## INTRODUCTION

Since its inception in 1990, the Lions' SightFirst program has helped restore sight to more than 30 million people around the world. SightFirst has invested over US\$200 million in surgeries, the improvement of hundreds of eye care facilities and training of thousands of eye care professionals. The program has also played a lead role in the fight against river blindness, helping to nearly eliminate the disease in Latin America and significantly reduce its public health impact in Africa. And, SightFirst efforts to improve eye care infrastructure have contributed to the general socio-economic development of the communities served.

Despite the extraordinary success of SightFirst, much work remains. The rapid increase in life expectancy and the growing prevalence and incidence of vision threatening diseases put millions at risk. Experts predict that by 2020, the world's blind population could double to 75 million and those with low vision may grow to nearly 250 million.

In response, the Lions have raised another US\$200 million to continue and expand SightFirst. These funds enable the program to maintain its efforts to control and eliminate avoidable causes of blindness – like cataract, trachoma and river blindness – while broadening its reach to combat emerging threats to vision – including diabetic retinopathy, uncorrected refractive error and childhood blindness. SightFirst will also support rehabilitation for those who are blind or have low vision, education for the blind and visually impaired and vital public health research.

The SightFirst Advisory Committee (SAC), the Lions leadership body responsible for the review and approval of SightFirst grant applications, is currently finalizing *SightFirst: Lions' Vision for All*, a long-range plan for the second phase of SightFirst. The planning committee has and continues to convene meetings with blindness prevention experts to identify needs and opportunities. This summary document, which is intended to keep Lion applicants and their project partners informed of recently approved SightFirst policy changes, outlines the new SightFirst mission statement, goals and objectives.



# MISSION

The Lions' SightFirst program builds comprehensive eye care systems to fight the major causes of blindness and care for blind and visually impaired persons. The program supports high-quality, sustainable projects that deliver eye care services, train personnel, develop infrastructure and/or provide rehabilitation and education in underserved communities.



## SIGHTFIRST STRATEGY

Lions orchestrate SightFirst projects in partnership with local health authorities, eye care professionals and other non-governmental organizations. Lions are actively involved in project management, fundraising, organization of outreach events and publicity. In some communities, Lions also advocate for increased government support of blindness prevention efforts.

Through the work of Lions and their partners, SightFirst aims to improve the performance of eye care systems in underserved communities. Projects include one or more of the following elements:

**Service Delivery** – Support for large numbers of eye care interventions for underserved populations, including detection, surgery, medical treatment and rehabilitation.

**Human Resource Training** – Training of various levels of eye care and rehabilitation professionals and management personnel to strengthen comprehensive eye care systems.

**Infrastructure Development** – Upgrades to eye care institutions with essential equipment and/or spatial improvements to increase both the quality and range of eye care services offered.

**Eye Health Education** – Creating awareness in the community, through the use of eye health education materials, to promote eye health, prevent eye disease and encourage regular eye exams.

## PRIMARY GOALS

SightFirst projects are planned and executed to accomplish the following five goals:

### 1. Develop comprehensive eye care systems

SightFirst projects seek to fill gaps in existing programs - including lack of public awareness and trained personnel and limitations of physical space and equipment - to support the development of comprehensive eye care systems that provide prevention, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation services for leading eye diseases.

### 2. Target underserved populations

SightFirst provides services to those who cannot access eye care because of economic, social or geographic barriers.

### 3. Deliver high-quality eye care services

SightFirst delivers cost-effective, equitable and high-quality eye care to the underserved.

### 4. Create sustainable eye care services

SightFirst supports sustainable eye care services through the training of local personnel and provision of equipment and facilities. Projects also include locally appropriate cost-recovery mechanisms.

### 5. Use data to identify and evaluate efforts

SightFirst projects take place in communities of greatest need as identified through survey data. SightFirst projects are properly evaluated through the collection and analysis of output, outcome and impact indicators.



# KEY PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

## Cataract

- SightFirst supports projects in communities where alternative funding for cataract surgeries - including subsidies from local government or other NGOs - is either unavailable or significantly limited.
- SightFirst infrastructure and manpower training projects aid institutions to sustain the services initiated or expanded through its support.

## Uncorrected Refractive Error (URE)

- SightFirst supports capacity building and the development of systems for the manufacture and distribution of new glasses.
- SightFirst projects target underserved school-aged children of both genders.

## Diabetic Retinopathy

- SightFirst projects benefit communities where diabetic retinopathy is a significant cause of blindness *and* where appropriate diabetes case management exists.
- SightFirst diabetic retinopathy screening & treatment projects are integrated into existing diabetes and eye care services.

## Childhood Blindness

- SightFirst childhood blindness projects aim to increase the capacities of Lions-affiliated institutions to provide primary and specialty eye care services for children.

## Trachoma

- SightFirst provides large numbers of sight-saving trichiasis surgeries as part of an integrated SAFE program – surgery, antibiotics, facial cleanliness and environmental change.

## River Blindness

- SightFirst funds existing Lions-led river blindness projects that have exhibited success and are focused on creating locally sustainable mechanisms for ivermectin distribution and the development of comprehensive eye care services.

## Low Vision

- SightFirst strengthens secondary and tertiary level eye care institutions with the addition or expansion of low vision services for adults & children.
- SightFirst provides funding for occasional regional training seminars for specialized low vision services.

## Eye Health Education

- SightFirst develops national-level eye health education programs where public health messages encourage at-risk populations to use existing eye care services.
- SightFirst provides eye health education resources to enhance its other projects.

## Research

- SightFirst supports operational and evaluative public health research to identify needs and assess program strategies, especially those related to equity, capacity building and sustainability in the delivery of eye care.

## Rehabilitation & Education for Blind and Visually Impaired Persons

- SightFirst funding objectives for this program area are under review.



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Lions work with their regional SightFirst technical advisors to develop project proposals and grant requests. Grant requests are reviewed twice a year by the SAC. For more information about the SightFirst program and the grant application process, please visit [www.lcif.org/sightfirst](http://www.lcif.org/sightfirst). The Sight Programs Department at Lions Clubs International Foundation can be contacted by phone at 630-571-5466 or through e-mail at [SightFirst@lcif.org](mailto:SightFirst@lcif.org).