

Vision For Life partners with Standing Voice to improve the visual health of children with albinism in Tanzania

Vision For Life™, created by Essilor, and UK NGO Standing Voice announce a 3-year-partnership to dispense corrective and protective glasses to over 4,000 children with albinism across 6 regions in Tanzania starting from March 12th 2016 in Mwanza city.

Vision For Life*, a strategic giving fund created by Essilor, the world leader in ophthalmic optics, has launched a program with Standing Voice** to improve education opportunities for children with albinism in Tanzania. The program will address the specific visual needs of 4,200 children by providing them with a complete eye exam, carried out by local optometrists, as well as offering each of them a pair of sunglasses for 100% UV protection. An estimated 1,800 of the children tested will also be provided with the corrective lenses they need to see clearly. These lenses will be photochromic – automatically darkening when exposed to sunlight, then fading back when indoors – so as to improve protection against sun damage to the children's eyes.

This partnership will be part of Standing Voice's Vision Program which provides vision education and visual aids in schools, ensuring children with albinism do not give up on their educational aspirations. In Tanzania, albinism affects 1 in 1,400 children born; only half of the children with albinism complete primary school; 10% attend secondary and only 7% find formal employment.

People with albinism have a melanin deficiency that causes complex visual impairment. They are also very photosensitive and have an impaired ability to absorb light which causes pain and discomfort. Therefore it is essential that their eyes are well cared of. But given the lack of eye care professionals in Tanzania, the specific vision needs of people with albinism are often overlooked.

As this rare congenital condition leads to a lack of pigmentation in the skin, hair, and eyes, people with albinism often face a life fraught with medical and social complications. Risks of blindness and skin cancer are higher than in the rest of the population.

"We are honored to partner with Standing Voice to provide the maximum number of children with albinism in Tanzania with the vision correction and protection they need to help them enjoy the education and life they deserve," said Aicha Mokdahi, Executive Director of Vision For Life.

***About Standing Voice**

Standing Voice is an INGO based in Tanzania with its headquarters in the United Kingdom. They exist to end human rights violations against marginalized groups around the world. Standing Voice currently tackles the social exclusion of people with albinism in Tanzania and wider East Africa. They design and deliver Health, Education, Advocacy and Community programmes, reaching thousands of people with albinism across Tanzania on a structured, regular basis. Standing Voice exists as a catalyst to amplify the voices of others, enabling individuals to shape their own lives and forge their own futures.

***About Vision For Life™**

Created by Essilor in January 2015, Vision For Life (Essilor Social Impact) is an endowment fund that aims to accelerate initiatives that combat the global challenge of poor vision by improving access to vision screening, correction and protection. Projects supported by Vision For Life include awareness-raising, advocacy, capacity-building and the creation of basic vision care infrastructure.