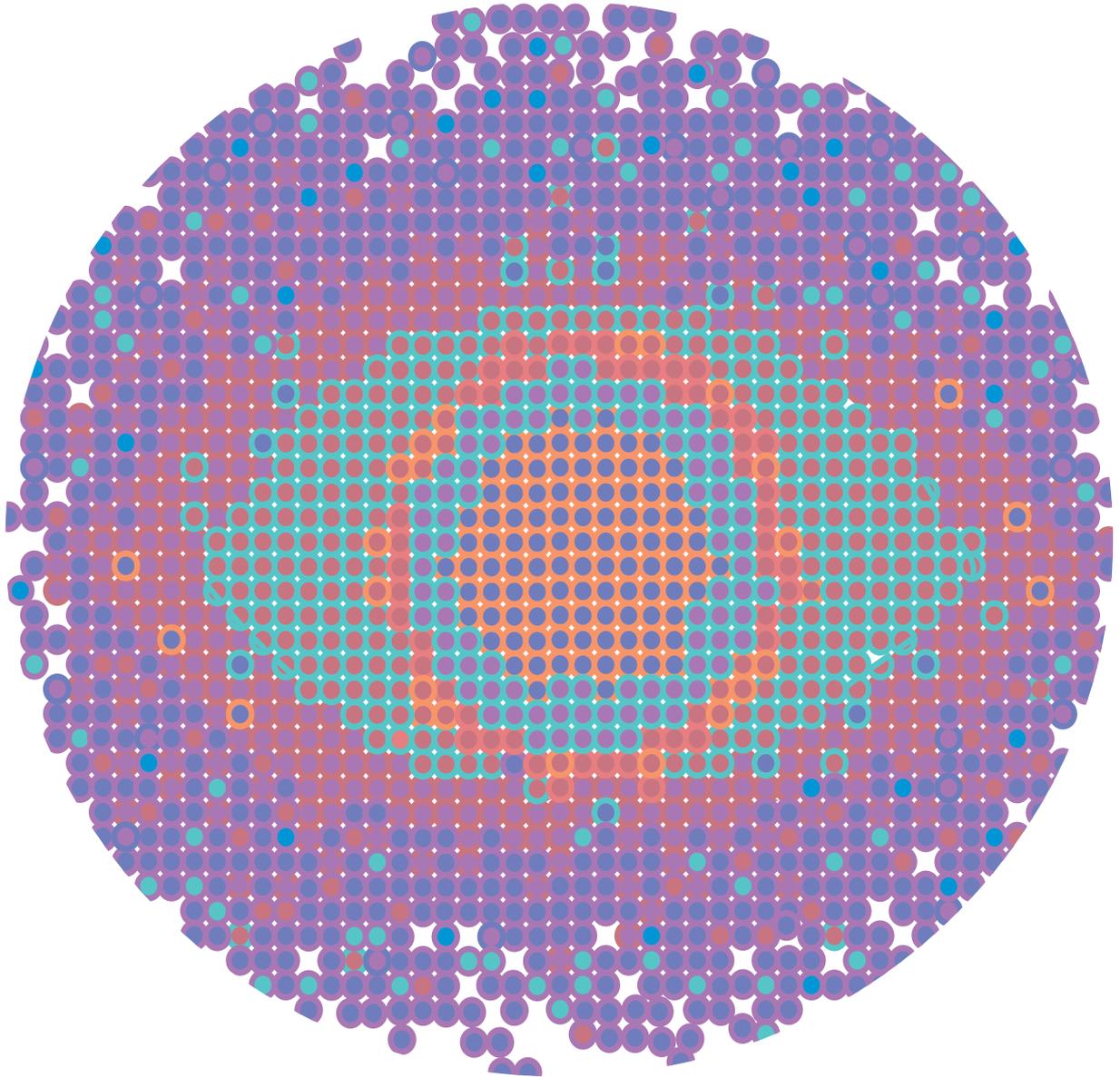


# IN-SIGHT

AN EXPLORATION OF VISION, VISUAL IMPAIRMENT AND THE  
SIGHT SAVER'S CAMPAIGN TO ERADICATE RIVER BLINDNESS

'It's not blindness that's the problem,  
but other people's attitudes.'



'Deep down  
you are just the same as everyone else.'

Try And See It My Way – Exploring Issues of Sight and Blindness in a Global Context

This topic was chosen because the National Federation of Young Farmer's Clubs joined forces with Sight Savers International in 1997 to run a campaign called the Fifty x 50p Challenge. The aim is to turn the tide on River Blindness.

The activities in this section also ask you to consider different degrees of blindness. To help you understand the differences, here are some definitions:

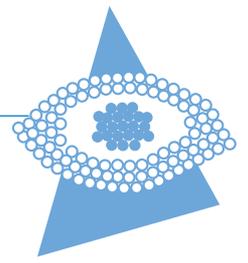
**Blindness** only a very small percentage of those who are registered as blind can see only darkness. A lot have some perception of light but this is not necessarily useful.

**Partially Sighted** someone who is not 'blind' but needs a lot of help with normal life. They often have special equipment and support such as a cane or a guide dog.

**Visually Impaired** this term covers those who are blind, partially sighted or have a minor sight problem but still need help of some sort.

There are many forms of visual impairment, so do not assume that, because one person needs a lot of light, everyone with a sight problem does.

Some people seem as if they are not looking at you when they are talking to you. This is because their eyes may function best in a certain position, so they may hold their head to one side so that they can look straight on.



## WARM-UP ACTIVITIES FOR IN-SIGHT

The purpose of these warm-up activities is to focus on the different senses to raise awareness of them. The purpose is not to try and experience what it might be like to have a visual impairment. A temporary voluntary experience can in no way give an accurate impression of the reality.

1. You will need a soft ball with a chime in it. Place all the participants in a circle. To start throw the ball to each other. The thrower calls out the name of the recipient.

Then either all put on blindfolds or shut your eyes properly and do the same again. How good was the throwing and catching without the use of sight? Would you get better with practice?

2. 'Blind Walk', a warm-up activity in the 'It's Not Fair' section (page J-1) could be used here too.
3. Brainstorm on a large piece of paper, using words or pictures, items which you could buy which cost fifty pence.

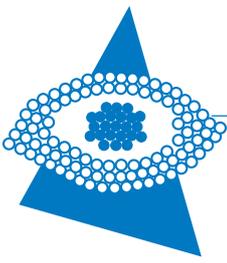
When the flow of ideas is slowing up, introduce to the group the concept of the **Sight Savers International Campaign to Turn the Tide on River Blindness**. Fifty pence will protect a person from River blindness for a year. See Activity 'River Blindness - A Community Decision' (page IS-25) for more on this.

4. Go into the garden or take a trip to a park. Sit in a space and close your eyes. Identify and make a note of what you can hear. Compare your notes with other members of the group.
  - What you would usually notice in the garden/park?
  - By not using your sight what do you miss? What do you gain?
  - Read the Activity Resource 'Listening to the rain' (page IS-3) which is part of a piece describing how it sounds when it is raining outside. Next time it rains try closing your eyes and listening to it. What picture does the sound suggest to you?
5. Divide the group into 3 smaller groups. Each group is to work in a corner. The task is to think of things we say - visually based for one group, sound based for another and feeling based for the third. Record them onto flip chart paper. For example 'Let me put you in the picture' or 'You sound very upset', 'It's cool' or 'It feels cold'. Bring the groups together and share the lists. Make additions if necessary.

Identify which type of phrase you use most and get together with those who chose the same category. Discuss why you think you use this type of phrase more than others.

### NOTE TO LEADERS

Phrases may reflect their character, life experiences, the environment in which they live and the influence of families and friends etc.



## WARM-UP ACTIVITIES FOR IN-SIGHT (CONT)

6. Copy the Activity Resource ‘What can you see in this picture?’ (page IS-5) for each pair.

Work in pairs. Each person looks at the picture for a few moments and then says what they see in it. Did you both see the same thing?

Find out from all the pairs what they saw. Did some see a different picture to others? If so try to work out why this happened. (*Note to Leaders:* the picture shows an old woman and a young woman).

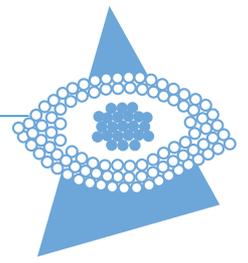
Extend the discussion to people experiencing the same situation, at the same time, but actually seeing it differently. This is because we cannot notice everything that affects our senses. There is too much information so we develop sophisticated filter systems of which we are not always conscious. Think about how witness statements differ.

7. Blindfold a few people in the group - or cover up one eye. Tell a few other people in the group to make lots of noise during the discussion when it begins.

Start a discussion - use displays; give visual instructions e.g. ‘do you like this?’ while pointing. The discussion can be about anything. After about ten minutes take off the blindfolds. Ask those who were blindfolded:

- How much of the discussion they heard or understood?
- Was it difficult looking at the displays?
- Could they understand the instructions given?
- Did they get annoyed with other people in the group who kept on making a noise? Why?





## LISTENING TO THE RAIN

An extract from John Hull's Acoustic Picture recorded in the tape **Try to see it my way - Exploring issues of sight and blindness in a global context.**

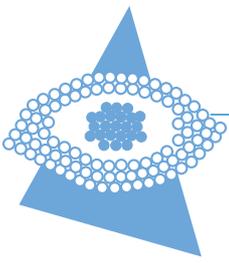
"I open the front door. The rain is falling outside. I stand in my front porch and listen to it. It is pattering off the glass panels of the porch. Outside, on the left, it's clattering down the drainpipe against the wall of the house. Further out to the left there is a larger duller area where the rain is falling quietly onto a huge bush.

In front of me there is the footpath leading down the steps to the front gate. I hear the rain falling on the concrete path with a sharp steady tapping. To the right there is the lawn. It rises in a little hill to the right. I can make out the contour of it quite clearly as the rain pads into the turf....

Back to the path. The rain is falling on the steps. I hear the cascading as the rain falls, as the water drops from step to step down to the pools, the splashy sound nearer to the front gate....

The rain is patterned and criss-crossed into hundreds and hundreds of little shapes and patterns. It's like a three dimensional picture. I can pick out the whole of my front garden".

**Try to see it my way** is published by Development Education Centre (Birmingham) for Sight Savers International. 1995.



## HOLI

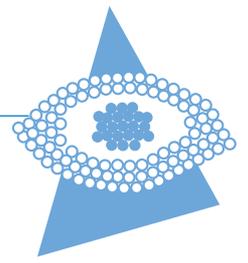
Holi, the Hindu Spring festival of colour, is celebrated on the day when there is a full moon in the month of Phalgun (February–March). It is one of India's oldest festival and many legends and short stories are associated with it.

### A BLIND GIRL CELEBRATES HOLI

I cannot see  
The new crimson sari  
My aunt has sent me  
But I can feel its softness,  
Run my fingers along  
Its silver edge,  
And in my head  
I see the bonfires'  
Red and Yellow flames,  
I hear their fizz and crackle  
And the cries of the people  
Throwing paint and water,  
Soaking each other in colour!  
I can smell the roasted coconuts  
And taste the popcorn  
The dates and lentils,  
Holi is red and gold  
Fire and spice;  
The festival of colours

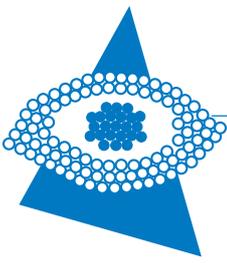
Theriesa Heine

Taken from **Festivals**; compiled by Jill Bennett Published by Scholastic Publications Ltd.



## WHAT CAN YOU SEE IN THIS PICTURE?





## DOES IT MAKE SENSE?

### PURPOSE

- To show how we under-use our senses and to show how important they are when one, such as sight, is lost.

### WHAT TO PREPARE

- Blindfolds for all participants.
- A cassette of household noises, such as flicking a light switch or opening a drawer, and a tape player to play it on.
- A set of ten or more liquids in containers (camera film canisters are ideal). The liquids have to have a particular smell such as bleach, cold tea or spices dissolved in water.
- A set of ten watertight bags, each containing something interesting to feel. A range of touch sensations should be represented from flour and tea, to solid objects like hairbrushes and cotton wool, and also cold baked beans and a raw egg. A range of material samples could be substituted here for the faint hearted!
- A washing bowl full of warm water and a towel.
- A set of ten or more edible powders, powdered crisps of different flavours, icing sugar and others. **(Try to avoid foods containing nuts - many people have an allergy to nuts and the effects can be very severe.)**

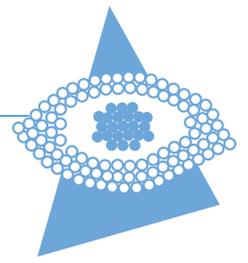
(For a shorter activity just use one of the sets.)

### TIME

75 minutes

### HOW TO RUN IT

1. Divide the group into four equal groups.
2. Have four supervisors each running a base.
3. Rotate the groups around the bases; each base should last fifteen minutes.
4. The bases are:-
  - (1) **Hearing** - play the tape of sounds to the group, have each group member write down what they think the noise is. Replay the tape and reveal the answers. (One of the writers thought that it was possible to spot the difference between hot and cold running water by the sound. Can you?)
  - (2) **Smell** - blindfold all the group members. Give each liquid to the group and have them decide what it is by **smell only**. Once they have decided, tell them the correct answer and move on. **Remember that substances such as bleach can be harmful and so should not be handled by people who are blindfolded.**



## DOES IT MAKE SENSE? (CONT)

- (3) **Touch** - blindfold all the group members. Pass the bags out one by one to the group and have them feel what is inside - **no smelling**. Get the group to decide what each bag contains, then tell them the correct answer. Pass out the messier bags (baked beans etc.) last, and remember to have the wash bowl and towel handy.

**Variation:** a range of material samples could be used. For example, fine sandpaper, velvet, seersucker etc.

- (4) **Taste** - blindfold all the group members. Give all the group members a taste of each powder and have them decide what they are. Then reveal the correct answer. For the ultimate test ask them to differentiate between plain and self-raising flour.

**Variation:** rather than blindfolds, choose ten edible substances and put them through a food processor, adding different food colourings. Discuss the reaction to the appearance of the food and the impact of the colour.

5. Gather everyone together and discuss:-

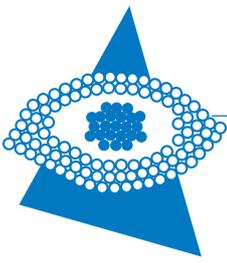
- How did it feel to concentrate on senses other than sight?
- Were some of your senses more/less developed than others?
- How would you cope if you only had the use of these senses and not sight in everyday life?

**Variations:** this activity can be run as a team or individual competition with points being awarded for correctly identifying each item.

Other ways of testing the senses are:-

- Tasting liquids, like the smell liquids (but not bleach).
- Identifying people's voices from a tape.

In a smaller room, with a smaller group, you may wish to reveal all the answers when the group has finished the activity.



## READING BRAILLE

### PURPOSE

- To experience what it is like to read Braille.

### WHAT TO PREPARE

- Braille letters can be represented on a giant scale using:
  - Ping-Pong balls in egg boxes. Each egg box will be one 'cell' for one letter. Remember the size and scale of real Braille are fixed.
  - Pegs on a board
  - Mapping pins on match boxes.

More realistic Braille can be made using drawing pins through cardboard, but care needs to be taken not to reverse the letters because you read dots from the other side of the paper (please also remember to remove the pins!).

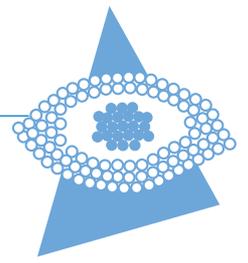
- Write two messages, using your chosen method, for pairs of participants to read.
- Blindfolds.

### TIME

60 minutes

### HOW TO RUN IT

1. In pairs, have participants read the pre-written messages while looking at the alphabet.
2. Blindfold the participants and have them describe to each other how it feels to read only with their fingertips. They could write their own name and then read it blindfolded.
3. Have the participants write a short message using the giant Braille systems. Either use pre-prepared messages or make up their own.
4. Bring the group together and discuss:
  - How easy do you think Braille would be to learn?
  - What other systems are available for visually impaired people to read with:
    - audio tapes
    - Moon - another tactile alphabet consisting of raised letter shapes
    - large print - to make text accessible to many people with visual impairments.
5. Braille is used for books, but what else is Braille used for?  
Think of uses you have noticed - like lift buttons, notices in museums and marking on bottles containing poisonous substances.
6. If possible get hold of an actual Braille book, or a Braille alphabet, to show what real Braille is like. Discuss the practicalities of Braille books - consider factors such as size, use of paper, cost etc. How far is it the responsibility of those communicating with others to make sure this is done in a way which is accessible to everyone?



## THE BRAILLE ALPHABET

Braille is a method of reading by touch. Braille letters are made of raised dots, arranged like the six dots on a domino.

<b>A</b> 	<b>B</b> 	<b>C</b> 	<b>D</b> 	<b>E</b> 	<b>F</b> 	<b>G</b> 	<b>H</b> 
<b>I</b> 	<b>J</b> 	<b>K</b> 	<b>L</b> 	<b>M</b> 	<b>N</b> 	<b>O</b> 	<b>P</b> 
<b>Q</b> 	<b>R</b> 	<b>S</b> 	<b>T</b> 	<b>U</b> 	<b>V</b> 	<b>W</b> 	<b>X</b> 
<b>Y</b> 		<b>Z</b> 					

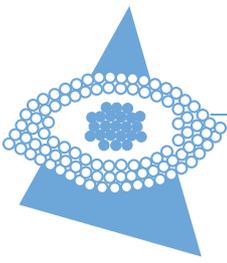
Braille punctuation marks include:

;	:	.	,	!	( )	?	“ ”
							

Braille is not written letter for letter for all words – there are short forms for some common words:

<b>and</b> 	<b>for</b> 	<b>of</b> 	<b>the</b> 	<b>with</b> 
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

														
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## OTHER PEOPLE'S ATTITUDES

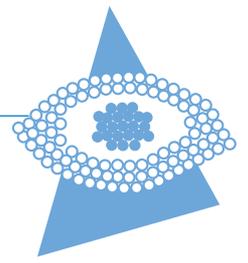
**People with visual impairments have similar interests to other people.**

**Some children in the United Kingdom with visual impairments talked about what they like doing, both in school and outside. This is what some of them said:-**

- watching TV, especially 'Neighbours';
- having fights with my sister;
- playing rounders;
- doing technology in school;
- Game Boy computer game;
- archery;
- boating;
- swimming;
- going to my church youth group;
- map making;
- designing and making models;
- electronics;
- going to the park to run about with a ball or go on the swings;
- playing tennis;
- using a vice, hammer and saw, and an electric drill with help, in technology at school;
- riding my bike.

**Three boys, aged 12 and 13 years, who are all partially sighted talked about what they liked to do:**

- archery - all three are very talented;
- canoeing;
- watching football;
- horseriding;
- computer games;
- Scouts - Richard said 'I've managed to get different badges which normal sighted people can do such as level 1 power boating and level 1 sailing. A Scout Leader said it was harder for me to get them because of my sight so I was pleased';



## OTHER PEOPLE'S ATTITUDES (CONT)

- hockey - Stuart said he was happy because 'I know that I can do activities that normal sighted people can do such as computers and some sports like hockey. Because the ball is on the ground, the stick is constantly with it so I know where it is.' His school have made it a policy always to buy yellow equipment when there is a choice of colour because it is the easiest for visually impaired people to see.

**In Kenya some visually impaired children talked about what they liked to do in their spare time. They said they liked:-**

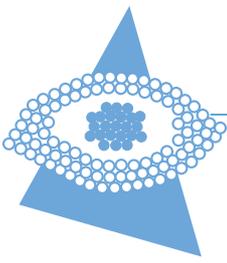
- playing;
- going for a walk by myself;
- watching cricket;
- studying books;
- playing football;
- cooking;
- sitting together telling stories.

**However, the similarities between sighted and visually impaired young people are not always recognised by sighted people. The young people talked about what made them feel sad.**

### FEELINGS

In the **United Kingdom**, Andrew from Birmingham explained that what made him sad and unhappy is 'when people treat you as if you are dumb or thick and they don't give you a chance to show that deep down you are just the same as everyone else...They don't tend to listen to you if you are in group activities and you get chosen last if you are in sporting events...Some people tend to take a straight look at you and judge you from how you look.'

In **Kenya**, Susan also said that the hardest thing about not being able to see very well was when someone looks at her too much and it makes her feel uncomfortable. Jacqueline added 'You can feel out of place.'



## OTHER PEOPLE'S ATTITUDES (CONT)

### EQUIPMENT

**Equipment is a gateway to equal opportunities. Equipment can ensure that a person with a visual impairment can make the most of the vision they have, as well as all their other talents.**

**The young people in Birmingham use:**

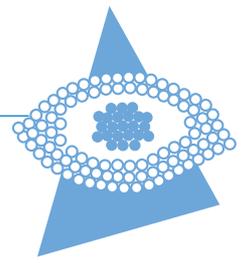
- magnifying glasses;
- a raised surface board with a magnetic back to bring written material closer;
- a closed circuit TV which enables the user to focus on and enlarge part of a page;
- a photocopier with an enlarger to make the print on worksheets larger;
- a special telescope-type piece of equipment to use to see the blackboard;
- a braille to write with. It is like a typewriter but with fewer keys;
- binoculars to use out of doors;
- a talking calculator;
- a talking watch.

**The young people in Kenya use:**

- a Braille machine for writing;
- a calculator;
- an abacus.

**Sight Savers** has developed a kit which comes in a sturdy hessian bag. It enables blind children and young people with a visual impairment to go to mainstream schools. They can learn alongside fully sighted children and join in most activities.

The kit includes a Braille writing slate; a stylus for making indentations and paper for creating Braille print; an abacus for counting; a centimetre tape measure with holes to mark each centimetre and notches every five centimetres; 'German film' and a rubber mat which are used to make raised diagrams, maps or drawings and a ruler with raised dots to indicate each centimetre.



## OTHER PEOPLE'S ATTITUDES (CONT)

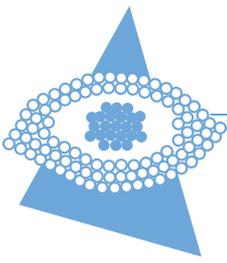
**Other equipment will be used by some people with visual impairments to get around safely on their own.**

**A long cane** is used to locate objects in the way, to identify different textures on the ground and to find the edges to things like pavements and doors.

**Using the other senses** gives clues to someone who is visually impaired as to where they are. Touch, smells, sounds, temperature can all be clues.

In the United Kingdom there is evidence in public places of efforts being made to meet the needs of visually impaired people. Dots in special paving stones near to pelican crossings assist them to cross in the right place. The bleeping noise tells them when it is safe to cross, just as the 'green man' lighting up is used by sighted people. Midland Mainline has painted all the knobs and handles yellow on their newly refurbished trains because this is the colour most easily seen by people with visual impairments. Raised dotted arrows on floor tiles in some stores direct visually impaired people to emergency exits.

**Guide dogs** are a well known way of helping people with visual impairments to travel about. To get a guide dog you have to be old enough to be responsible for a dog and be able to look after one properly. Guide dogs are not common in some other countries where they would be difficult to manage where livestock roams free or where food supplies are limited.

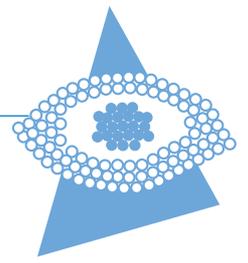


## BLINDNESS DOES NOT ALWAYS MEAN BLACKNESS

The pictures on this page represent the effects of four of the most common visual impairments. Most 'blind' people have some useful vision and not all visually impaired people will see things in the same way.

<p><b>Normal vision</b></p>	<p><b>Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall Humpty Dumpty had a great fall All the king's horses and all the king's men Couldn't put Humpty together again</b></p>
<p><b>Macular degeneration</b></p>	<p>Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall Humpty Dumpty had a great fall All the king's horses and all the king's men Couldn't put Humpty together again</p>
<p><b>Advanced glaucoma</b></p>	
<p><b>Retinitis pigmentosa</b></p>	
<p><b>Cataract</b></p>	<p>Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall Humpty Dumpty had a great fall All the king's horses and all the king's men Couldn't put Humpty together again</p>

Reprinted with permission from **Try to see it my way** published by Development Education Centre (Birmingham) for Sight Savers International. 1995, p.6.



## SOUNDS ON THE STREET

### PURPOSE

- To provide an introduction to Kenya and to give an idea of what life might be like in Nairobi, the capital. Kenya is one of the places where the charity Sight Savers International is working to prevent blindness.
- To encourage awareness of how much we use sound to know what is going on.

### WHAT TO PREPARE

- Paper and pens plus sufficient copies of the photograph, Activity Resource 'A street scene in Nairobi' (page IS-17), for each small group of six.

### TIME

40 minutes

### HOW TO RUN IT

1. Divide the group into threes and ask them to think about what sounds they might hear on a typical busy day in Nairobi. Make a note either in writing or small drawings.
2. Ask the groups to join into sixes to hear what the other groups thought of.
3. Give each of the sixes a photograph for them to tick off the things they noted.
4. Add other suggestions which are less easy to imagine e.g. horns blaring, languages used, names of fruit and vegetables being sold, a range of music.
5. How many of these sounds would you hear in the big city nearest to where you live? Are the sounds different depending on the time of day or night or the weather? How do they compare with the sounds of a city which any member of the group has visited in another country?

These are ideas for the list of sounds;

- Traffic - cars, buses, mini-buses, lorries, engines running and brakes screeching.
- People - talking, greeting friends, calling out while selling things, laughing, shouting, calling passengers to get on buses, footsteps running and walking.
- Music - radios and cassette recorders playing at street corners and on buses; a variety of sounds like Kenyan pop, reggae and Western pop.

### Discussion Points

- How do we normally react to sound (turn to look)?
- How would we interpret what we hear if we cannot see the source of the sound?
- How does the tone of voice affect our understanding of what is said?

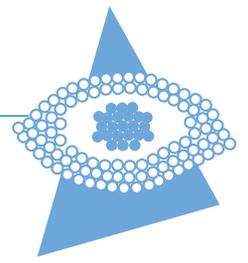


## SOUNDS ON THE STREET (CONT)

### Variations

1. The groups could be divided into some focusing on Nairobi and some on the big town near you.
2. An additional task could be to think of times when people are doing one thing and listening out for another at the same time. E.g. a parent working in the kitchen preparing a meal while listening to the young children in the next room, calling out when they start doing something potentially messy or dangerous. Another example would be a teacher looking at one student's work but listening out for the rest of the class.

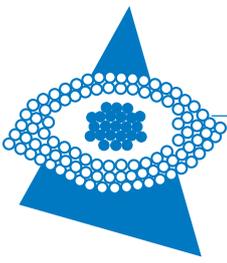
Adapted from 'Street sounds' in **Try to see it my way** published by Development Education Centre (Birmingham) for Sight Savers International. p35.



## A STREET SCENE IN NAIROBI



From: **New Journeys** photopack published by DEC (Birmingham.)



## THE RUN-AROUND QUIZ

### PURPOSE

- To raise awareness of some of the facts and figures about visual impairment.

### WHAT TO PREPARE

- The letters A, B and C on big sheets of paper or card. Stick them up in three different corners of the room.

### TIME

30 minutes

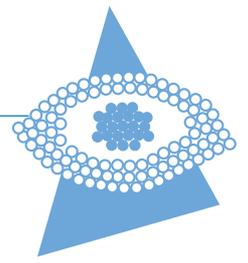
### HOW TO RUN IT

1. The question-caller has a copy of the list of questions and answers (pages IS-19 and IS-20).
2. Call out the first question and the three possible answers. Ask the participants to go to the corner of the room which they think is the right answer. Tell them which corner is right and encourage whoops and moans as you feel appropriate.
3. Participants may be encouraged to keep a tally of the number they got right, if they want it to be competitive.
4. Afterwards, answer any questions arising from the quiz or take the group into a discussion of some of the issues. The points below are suggestions.

### Discussion points

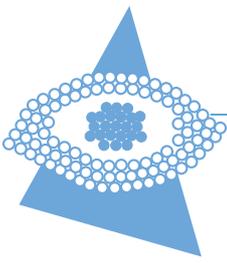
1. How far do you think other people's attitudes and actions are a problem to visually impaired people? This could include behaviour towards an individual or how something is organised e.g. only using TV screens for information in an airport or station rather than having announcements as well, or a trainer putting up a flip chart and waiting for the group to read it, rather than reading it out as well.
2. Why do you think that so much eye disease is curable yet so many people may not be able to receive the cure? What should be done about it and by whom?
3. Do you make assumptions about what visually impaired young people are like and what they like to do? Do you know anyone with such an impairment?
4. How welcoming and easy would it be for a visually impaired person to join your club or group? What would you need to change to include someone with a visual impairment?

See Activity Resource 'Other people's attitudes' (pages IS-10–IS-13) for information to support these discussion points.



## THE RUN-AROUND QUIZ

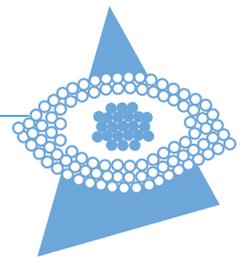
1. How many children throughout the world have severe visual impairments or are blind?  
**A. 1 million**                      **B. 1.5 million**                      **C. 2.5 million**
2. In the poorest countries in the world, how many times are people more likely to lose their sight than in the UK?  
**A. 2 times**                      **B. 7 times**                      **C. 10 times**
3. How much of this loss could be prevented or cured?  
**A. 30%**                      **B. 50%**                      **C. 75%**
4. How many people are blind or are affected by River Blindness?  
**A. 800,000**                      **B. 18 million**                      **C. 80 million**
5. How much does the medication cost per person per year to treat River Blindness?  
**A. 25p**                      **B. 50p**                      **C. £5.00**
6. What organisation provides the drug to those affected by River Blindness?  
**A. Sight Savers International**      **B. Royal National Institute for the blind**  
**C. Visual Impaired Society**
7. Which part of Africa is most affected by River Blindness?  
**A. North Africa**                      **B. Central Africa**                      **C. South Africa**
8. How many tablets are needed to protect a person (over 5 years old) from River Blindness?  
**A. One every day**                      **B. One every week**                      **C. One every year**
9. How many people will be protected by Sight Savers International in 1998?  
**A. 1.5 million**                      **B. 2 million**                      **C. 3 million**
10. What techniques might visually impaired people use to move around on their own?  
**A. Long cane**                      **B. Guide dog**                      **C. Using the senses of touch, smell and hearing for clues**



## THE RUN-AROUND QUIZ ANSWERS

1. **B.** 1.5 million
2. **C.** 10 times
3. **C.** 75%
4. **B.** 18 million
5. **B.** 50p
6. **A.** Sight Savers International
7. **B.** Central Africa
8. **C.** One every year
9. **B.** 2 million.
10. All of them!! A, B and C.

See the section headed 'Equipment' in Activity Resource 'Other people's attitudes' (page IS-12-13).



## EFFECTS OF RIVER BLINDNESS - ADVANCED QUIZ

### PURPOSE

- To develop a greater understanding of River Blindness amongst people who already have some knowledge of the subject.

### WHAT TO PREPARE

- Activity Resource 'Effects of Blindness – Advanced Quiz Questions' (page IS-22). One copy for each group of 5/6 participants.
- One copy of Activity Resource 'Effects of Blindness – Advanced Quiz Answers' (page IS-23 & 24.)
- Activity Resource 'River Blindness - A Community Decision: General Information' (page IS-28 & 29). One copy for each participant.
- Paper and pens/pencils for each group.
- Small prize (optional).

### TIME

One hour

### HOW TO RUN IT

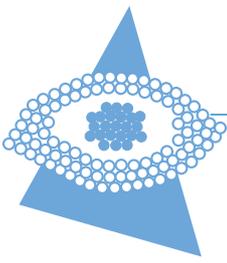
1. Divide the participants into groups of 5 or 6.
2. Give each group a sheet of paper and a pen/pencil.
3. Ask each group to choose a team name and write it on the top of the sheet.
4. Read the questions out and give them two or three minutes to write the answer down on the sheet of paper.
5. When all the questions have been asked, instruct the groups to pass their piece of paper to the next group.
6. Read out the answers to the questions.
7. Instruct the participants to return the answer sheet to the correct group.
8. Decide which group has the most correct answers (and award prizes if appropriate).
9. Give each participant a copy of Activity Resource 'River Blindness - A Community Decision: General Information'.

### Variations

Rather than give all the answers out at the end, encourage discussion around each answer as they are revealed.

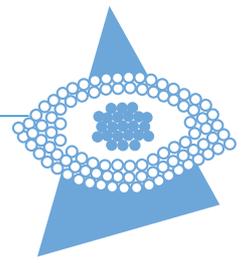
### Discussion Points

1. In their groups, ask participants to identify how their lives would change if up to half of their community were blind.
2. Use the answers (and the activity resource sheets) to initiate discussions around the issue of River Blindness, its effects, and the cost of providing preventative medicine.
3. Explore ways in which participants might wish to raise money for Sight Savers International.



## EFFECTS OF RIVER BLINDNESS - ADVANCED QUIZ QUESTIONS

1. What do many Africans use rivers for?
2. What causes River Blindness and what are the symptoms?
3. Where does the fly live and breed?
4. In which parts of Africa is the fly found?
5. How can communities avoid getting River Blindness?
6. In some villages up to 50% of people go blind before they die. True or false?
7. How do people cope when River Blindness robs them of their sight?
8. What medication can prevent River Blindness?
9. Which organisation provides the drug to those affected?
10. How can medicines be distributed in Africa?
11. Where are the costs incurred?
12. Who administers the drug?
13. What transportation is given to those who administer the drug?
14. As the drug can only be given to people over the age of 5, how can volunteers decide if a child is old enough to receive it (assuming no birth certificate is available.)
15. How can we support Sight Savers International in their work?



## EFFECTS OF RIVER BLINDNESS

### - ADVANCED QUIZ ANSWERS

#### QUESTIONS

1. What do many Africans use rivers for?
2. What causes River Blindness and what are the symptoms?
3. Where does the fly live and breed?
4. In which parts of Africa is the fly found?
5. How can communities avoid getting River Blindness?
6. In some villages up to 50% of people go blind before they die. TRUE OR FALSE?
7. How do people cope when River Blindness robs them of their sight?
8. What medication can prevent River Blindness?
9. Which organisation provides the drug to those affected?
10. How can medicines be distributed in Africa?
11. Where are the costs incurred?

#### ANSWERS

Drinking. Washing. Providing crops with water. It is therefore essential to human survival.

The black Simulium fly. They live on human blood. When they take this they infect the person bitten leaving some worm larvae behind. The worms grow and cause itching and skin problems. It can eventually attack the eyes, leading to blindness.

Along the river banks of fast flowing rivers, where there is fertile soil.

Mali, Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Congo, Angola, Zaire and more.

Kill the flies. Move away from the river.

Discussion point:

If villagers move away from the river, more houses need to be built. It is a long way to fetch water. The ground is less fertile. It would still be necessary to use the river to fish so people would still be bitten. Moving away would not help those already blind.

True.

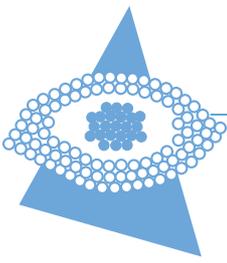
They get others to guide them around. These are often children who are kept away from school to help other family members.

Mectizan.

Sight Savers International.

Dropped from an aeroplane. By road. One method is to train local people to administer the medicine and provide them with a bicycle or motorbike to reach outlying villages.

The drug is given free by the manufacturers but the costs are incurred from transportation and training people to administer it.

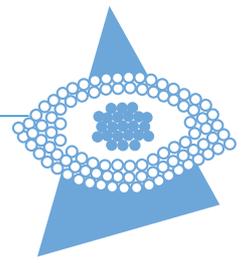


## EFFECTS OF RIVER BLINDNESS

### - ADVANCED QUIZ ANSWERS (CONT)

- 12. Who administers the drug?**  
Village volunteers are trained to distribute and administer the drug. They know the people and the terrain and are therefore in the best position to be able to give it to as many people as possible.
- 13. What transportation is given to those who administer the drug?**  
If they cannot reach villages on foot, they are given a bicycle, a 50cc motorcycle or 125cc motorcycle, depending on the terrain and the distance being covered.
- 14. As the drug can only be given to people over the age of 5, how can volunteers decide if a child is old enough to receive it, (assuming no birth certificate is available)?**  
If a child can stretch an arm over his/her head and touch the tip of his/her ear on the other side, s/he is said to be over five years old.
- 15. How can we support Sight Savers International in their work?**  
Raise awareness of the problem.  
Fundraise.

Quiz created by Sarah Blake, Surrey Young Farmers.



## RIVER BLINDNESS - A COMMUNITY DECISION

### PURPOSE

- To increase knowledge and understanding of River Blindness.

### WHAT TO PREPARE

- Activity Resource 'River Blindness - Roles' (page IS-26) copied and cut as indicated.
- Activity Resource 'River Blindness - A Community Decision: General Information' (pages IS28–IS29.) Three copies.
- Activity Resource - 'River Blindness - Statements' (page IS-30.) Three copies.
- Activity Resource - 'Record of Voting' (page IS-27.)

### TIME

75 minutes

### HOW TO RUN IT

You are all people from one village which is located on fertile land near a river. You are getting ready for a big meeting to discuss and decide whether the village should move.

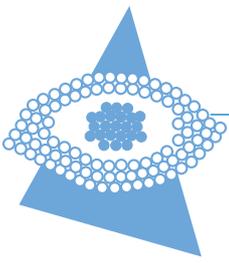
Nearly half of the adults in the community are affected by River Blindness. This means many children will have a blind parent or grandparent. They know it is worse for communities who live near rivers. Some of the people believe the blindness is caused by the flies; others don't know.

1. Put the participants in three equal sized groups. Randomly distribute the role cards, one to each group. This will tell them whether they are a group of children, parents/farmers or grandparents. Also give each group a copy of 'River Blindness – General Information' and 'River Blindness – Statements'
2. Using 'River Blindness – Statements' discuss each of the statements and decide whether it is an argument for or against moving the village to higher ground, away from the river.
3. Use a show of hands to indicate the support for each statement placing the number for and against on the 'Record of Voting'. Remember that each decision is about whether you, in your role, are for or against moving the village.
4. At the end of the allotted time the group totals the scores on either side of the sheet and work out if they have decided to move or stay.
5. All the groups come back together and each group gives their verdict. Add the group scores together to give the community decision.
6. Then spend some time discussing which of the statements caused most debate in the groups. Were there significant differences in the groups?

Why might this be so?

This is a real situation for many communities facing the damage done by River Blindness where the drug Mectizan is not yet available to them.

Adapted from 'River Blindness' in **Try to see it my way** published by Development Education Centre (Birmingham) for Sight Savers International, p.50-56.



## RIVER BLINDNESS - ROLES

### **YOU ARE A GROUP OF CHILDREN**

None of your group is personally affected by River Blindness,  
but many of you have a blind parent or grandparent.

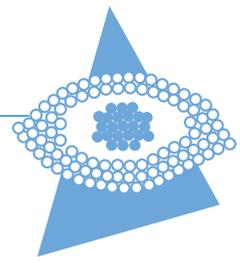
### **YOU ARE A GROUP OF PARENTS/FARMERS**

Half of the people in your group are affected by River Blindness.  
Many will have an elderly relative who is blind.

### **YOU ARE A GROUP OF GRANDPARENTS**

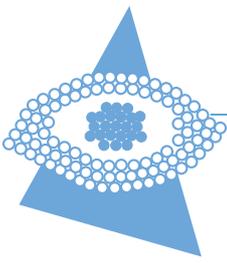
Half of the people in your group  
are affected by River Blindness.

#



### RECORD OF VOTING

Arguments AGAINST moving	River Blindness STATEMENTS	Arguments FOR Moving
	1	
	2	
	3	
	4	
	5	
	6	
	7	
	8	
	9	
	10	
	11	
	12	
	13	
	14	
	15	
	16	
	17	
	18	
TOTAL		TOTAL

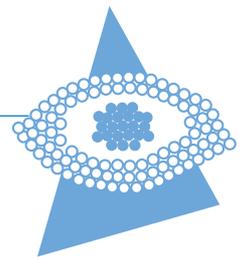


## RIVER BLINDNESS - A COMMUNITY DECISION: GENERAL INFORMATION

The points listed below are all facts to do with River Blindness. Some of the points will support the argument to move the village away from the river and some to stay.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- River Blindness affects 18 million people in parts of Africa, the Yemen and Central America.
- It is the fourth most common cause of blindness in the world.
- For years it has plagued communities who live in villages on fertile land by fast flowing rivers. People use the river water for drinking, washing and providing crops with water. Rivers are therefore essential to African life - people depend on them for their survival and therefore cannot move away from them to avoid the Similium fly. However, some farmland is now impossible to farm because so many people have been bitten by the fly.
- The disease is caused by flies which breed in fast flowing water. The flies live on human blood. When they take blood they infect the person bitten by leaving some worm larvae behind. The infection means that worms grow inside the person's body. They produce millions of 'microfilariae' which cause maddening itching and skin problems (a bit like scabies, which you can get in the UK) and painful suffering.
- The adult worms can grow to a maximum of 75cm. (Look at a ruler – 1 foot is 30.5 cm – so this is a long worm!) They live in a clump under the skin and cause lumps. The young ones may be smaller, 3.3cm long, but they cause tremendous itching, especially when they die.
- When they die in the cornea (window of the eye) a mist forms over it. If they die in the nerve, you get tunnel vision, where you can only see things right in front of you.
- When they get into people's eyes they eventually cause blindness, usually when people reach their 30's and 40's, which is when they are looking after children and the older people in the village and doing most of the farming, cooking, washing etc. The blindness therefore affects the whole village.
- It is more prevalent in remote areas because where there are fewer people they get bitten more often.
- A drug has been developed which can prevent River Blindness cheaply and safely. It is called Mectizan.
- One tablet a year is all that is needed to protect against River Blindness. However, the tablets must be taken for at least ten years, because those long adult worms can live for that long in the person's body and keep on producing the smaller microfilariae.
- Sight Savers International is working to prevent River Blindness in seven African countries. The cost of supplying and administering the tablet is 50p per person per year. Therefore £5 protects someone against River Blindness for ten years and £250 will protect an average village for one year. The tablets are given free by the manufacturers but the cost comes from its distribution to the remote

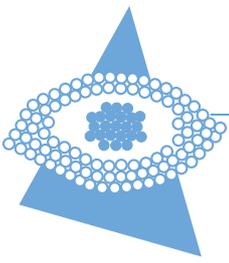


## RIVER BLINDNESS - A COMMUNITY DECISION: GENERAL INFORMATION (CONT)

rural areas of developing countries where there is little transport, and the training needed by the local volunteers to administer it correctly.

- Children under five cannot take Mectizan. Since it is difficult to know how old a child is, volunteers use a very simple test. If the child's arm is long enough to reach over its head and touch the top of its other ear, then s/he is said to be at least five years old!
- The villagers have to be convinced of the value of the drug. Their culture and traditions may make this difficult, at least for a while, in some communities.
- Research has shown that Mectizan is a safe drug with very few side effects. The tablet works very quickly in relieving painful symptoms – people feel better in a day or two. This may persuade others that it will work.

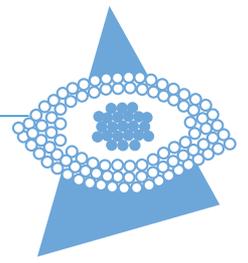
The worm is called **Onchocerca Volvulus**. The fly is called **Simulium Damnosum**.



## RIVER BLINDNESS - STATEMENTS

### THE SITUATION IN THE VILLAGE NOW.

1. The fly, *Simulium Damnosum*, lives and breeds in the river next to this village.
2. People spray the rivers to kill the flies. This causes damage to the environment.
3. There is no programme to bring Mectizan to the village at the moment.
4. The village is on fertile land now. The villagers can grow plenty of food for everyone.
5. The area they would move to is less fertile, so there might be times when food would be short if there is a poor harvest.
6. After a while the land may become less fertile and they have to move back to the river anyway.
7. More people will go blind if they stay so they will not be able to farm the land as they do now.
8. It will be a big effort to rebuild all the houses.
9. Some men will still go to the river to fish and they could still be bitten.
10. Some people have been bitten already and if they are not treated they will go blind.
11. If they move, there will be no flies so people will not be bitten in their houses or in the fields.
12. They may have to go further for water if they move.
13. The itching which happens after being bitten by the flies is terrible.
14. Some people think only God knows why people go blind.
15. Other people think that it happens because people are jealous or cry too much.
16. Maybe Mectizan will be brought to this village in the next two years because a visiting doctor said an international organisation was hoping to do this. The river will not be such a problem then because the flies will not make people ill.
17. People who are already blind will have to learn to find their way around the new village.
18. If more of the adults become blind, it means the children will have to do more work; farming, cooking, collecting water and looking after their blind parents and grandparents. It will be difficult for them to attend school regularly.



## REFERENCE MATERIAL, ORGANISATIONS AND CAMPAIGNS

### REFERENCE MATERIAL

The reference material used in this section includes:

1. 'Try to see it my way. Exploring issues of sight and blindness in a global context'. Published by Development Education Centre (Birmingham) for Sight Savers International, 1995. Tape and book activity pack.
2. Several newsletters 'Horizons' and publicity / fundraising leaflets from Sight Savers International.

### ORGANISATIONS

1. Development Education Centre, Gillett Centre, 998 Bristol Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 6LE.

DEC is an educational charity working with groups of teachers to introduce a global dimension and development perspective to the curriculum.

2. Sight Savers International, Grosvenor Hall, Bolnore Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH16 4BX. Tel: 01444 412424 Fax: 01444 415866.

Sight Savers is a charity that has been working for over forty years to prevent and cure blindness in developing countries and to provide education and training for incurably blind people.

It works in collaboration with partners in those countries to bring services to the maximum number of people. Sight Savers builds and helps support permanent eye units, funds mobile units which reach out to remote rural areas and promotes education about eye health. It helps blind children to attend and succeed at mainstream schools. It trains people who live there in eye care and eye medicine so they can treat the people in their country. It also trains those who are incurably blind so that they can live independently.

3. RNIB, Royal National Institute for the Blind, 224 Great Portland Street, London W1N 6AA. Tel: 0171-388-1266.

The vision which the RNIB works to achieve is:

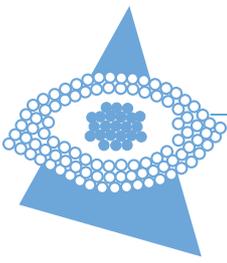
'RNIB wants a world in which blind and partially sighted people enjoy the same rights, freedoms, responsibilities and quality of life as people who are fully sighted.

Our mission is to challenge blindness by empowering people with a visual impairment, removing the barriers they face and helping to prevent blindness.'

Their objectives are to:

- promote better education, training, employment and welfare of visually impaired people
- protect the interests of blind and partially sighted people
- prevent blindness.

Most counties have an association (e.g. Kent Association for the Blind) which deals with mobility, rehabilitation, talking newspapers, support, education etc. and would probably be willing to give talks to groups or to show the equipment which is available.



## REFERENCE MATERIAL, ORGANISATIONS AND CAMPAIGNS (CONT)

4. PSS (Partially Sighted Society) 62, Salisbury Road, London, NW6 6NS.

Tel: 0171 372 1551

They provide:

- advice, information and counselling support to all people with visual impairment
- advice and training for low vision aids
- help with setting up support groups
- publications.

### CAMPAIGNS

In the year 1996-7 a major global initiative for the elimination of avoidable blindness was launched by the World Health Organisation, bringing together a broad spectrum of non-governmental agencies, governments, funding agencies and other interested parties.

Sight Savers is totally committed to this initiative in which it has been involved from the beginning. It builds on other international initiatives which are already under way to combat River Blindness and trachoma and in which Sight Savers is a leading player.

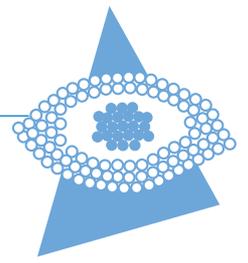
This aim to eliminate avoidable blindness will only happen if sustainable eye care services are established in the worst affected countries. One of the most crucial parts of these services are appropriately trained personnel. Sight Savers and other charities that seek to assist people to manage their own programmes and be independent, give high priority to training eye care workers. These workers are recruited in the affected country. The programmes might be training courses for ophthalmologists, microsurgeons or community-based health workers.

Sight Savers also works through education and training to assist those who are incurably blind to continue to work and so to be independent. For Example: Ellipu Babu from India has been taught how to make his way around his village using a cane and landmarks, and to look after his own water buffaloes. He was given help with getting a loan to buy them.

From: **Sight Savers Annual Review 1996-7.**

### THE FIFTY X 50P CHALLENGE - TURN THE TIDE ON RIVER BLINDNESS

This is a campaign where the Young Farmers' Clubs joined forces with Sight Savers International aiming to turn the tide on River Blindness. An information pack comes with all you need to support the campaign: fundraising ideas to choose from; how to organise an event; how to manage the publicity; how to deal with the money side and to do it all legally!



## REFERENCE MATERIAL, ORGANISATIONS AND CAMPAIGNS (CONT)

### PUTTING YOUR MONEY TO WORK

The “Fifty x 50p Challenge” will be raising vital funds for two programmes in Ghana

#### HOPE FOR BLIND FARMERS

There is no cure for River Blindness, but rehabilitation training is giving new hope to thousands of its victims. Sight Savers’ community-based programmes bring training to blind people’s own homes. Often they are able to re-learn skills which were second nature to them when they could see. Most River Blindness sufferers want to be able to farm again.

Trainees gain much more than practical skills. When blind people are able to contribute to their family welfare once more, they regain their confidence and self-esteem, too.

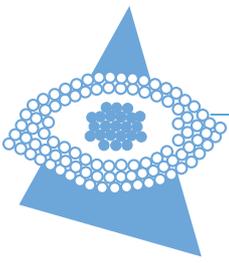
In Northern Ghana which is badly affected by River Blindness, the Binaba Agricultural Rehabilitation Centre is proving that loss of sight need not mean loss of livelihood. It has already set more than 1,200 people on the road to an active and independent life. Each year the project takes on over 100 new trainees and they hope to increase this number.

After mastering daily living skills and learning to find their way around using a white cane, the trainees can choose what other skills they want to learn. The range of activities includes:

- basic agricultural production;
- dry season gardening;
- craft production, such as ropes and mats;
- agricultural processing for women - e.g. rice husking, preparing malt for local beer making;
- small animal husbandry backed by a loan scheme.

The Fifty x 50p Challenge will be opening the door to a new life for many more blind people in Northern Ghana. These are just some of the ways you will be helping:

- £25** provides a loan to buy equipment and nuts to start Shea Butter production. This is used as cooking oil and medicines and fetches a good market price.
- £200** funds a loan to buy two bullocks and a plough, which enables a blind farmer and their family to cultivate much more land. They also make money by hiring out the plough.
- £500** pays the annual salary for a field worker. Each worker trains up to twenty new blind people a year and continues to help existing trainees until they are self-sufficient.
- £1,000** keeps two field workers’ motorcycles on the road for a year, including fuel, insurance, spares and repairs. The unmade roads of Northern Ghana make great demands on these vehicles which are essential if field workers are to be able to visit all their blind clients.



## REFERENCE MATERIAL, ORGANISATIONS AND CAMPAIGNS (CONT)

### LIFTING THE THREAT OF RIVER BLINDNESS

River Blindness is the fourth most common cause of blindness in the world, with 350,000 victims and a further two million people whose vision is severely impaired. Another 18 million people are infected with the disease, most of them in Africa.

For centuries rural communities have lived with the curse of River Blindness. Now, at last, we can fight back....thanks to a small white pill. Mectizan is a thoroughly tested and very safe drug which only needs to be given once a year. It kills the minute worms which breed from the larvae transmitted by the Simulium fly and cause blindness when they attack the eyes. Treatment must continue for at least ten years to break the transmission cycle of the disease.

Sight Savers has pioneered a community-based method of distributing Mectizan which is now internationally accepted. Village volunteers are trained to give out the tablets in their area, under professional supervision. Sight Savers provides transport for supervisors and for distributors who have a large area to cover. We also help in planning, implementing and monitoring programmes. Mectizan is provided free of charge by the manufacturers, Merck, Sharp & Dohme.

### The Fifty x 50p Challenge will be helping Sight Savers International to bring Mectizan treatment to villages in Ghana

- 50p** protects one person against River Blindness for a year
- £5** protects a person against River Blindness for ten years
- £60** buys a bicycle for a Mectizan distributor with a large area to cover
- £250** treats a small village for a year
- £2,500** ensures ten years of Mectizan distribution for a small village
- £3,000** buys and meets the freight costs of a robust motor cycle for a clinical officer who is supervising a distribution programme