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# NEW SIGHT EYE CARE

Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2021

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## **‘Holding hands around the world’ by Karis Faith Samoutou**

The New Sight team and its supporters around the world have worked to support the community in Congo against the COVID-19 virus by promoting precautions and health education, assisting local health departments and seeking to provide sanitising or medical supplies to the neediest. The Ouesso Interim Eye Centre continued to treat emergency cases, as well as supporting long-term patients through the lockdown.

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'New Sight Logo' by  
Karis Faith Samoutou.

## Overview

New Sight Eye Care is a registered charity founded in the UK in 2011 and in Hong Kong in 2013. We provide support and financial aid to the Republic of Congo, pioneering the first and only eye surgery centre in the northern part of the country, and now to build a new eye hospital in Ouessou.

The charity is governed by trustees in the UK and by directors in Hong Kong, as well as being a non-profit limited company.

## Objectives

The objectives of the charity are:

1. *The advancement of health, and the saving of lives in particular (but without limitation), by providing assistance overseas principally (but not exclusively) in the Republic of Congo for those affected with sight difficulties; and*
2. *To fulfil such other purposes which are exclusively charitable and are connected to the charitable work of the Charity as the Trustees and Directors may from time-to-time think fit.*

KEY GOVERNING BOARDS AND COMMITTEES			
UK Board Trustees	HK Board Directors	Executive Committee	Project Steering Group
Mr. Christopher Denham	Ms. Evelyn Chan	Ms. Evelyn Chan	Ms. Silla Chow
Dr. Terence Pang	Ms. Pauline Lo	Ms. Phoebe Chan	Dr. Alan Ng
Mr. Henri Samoutou	Dr. Alan Ng	Ms. Po Cheung	Mr. Chuck Ng
Dr. Joyce Samoutou-Wong	Dr. Hannah Too	Mr. Victor Kam	Ms. Rita Pang
		Mr. Charles Leung	Dr. Terence Pang
		Ms. Stephanie Ng	Mr. Henri Samoutou
		Ms. Agnes Ng Lai	Dr. Joyce Samoutou-Wong
		Mr. Henri Samoutou	
		Dr. Joyce Samoutou-Wong	

## Impfondo Eye Centre

The north of Congo had never had an eye centre. This was the reason that Joyce and Henri Samoutou uprooted their family's life in the UK in April 2012 to pioneer the first and only non-profit eye centre in the north of Congo. The eye centre is based in Pioneer Christian Hospital in Impfondo, the capital of the Likouala Region. This general hospital founded in 2006 is developing rapidly. It has 32 buildings in a 17-acre site. It has grown to 75 beds in recent years. New Sight enjoys good relationships with the government, the Ministry of Health, as well as the local authorities and communities. New Sight has collaborated frequently with other non-profit organisations such as United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees and Médecins d'Afrique, who frequently refer their patients for eye treatment.

New Sight gave the Impfondo eye centre with all the equipment and trained staff as a gift to Pioneer Christian Hospital in August 2017. The nurses who were trained by New Sight can now handle emergency, consultation, inpatient, anaesthetics, and minor surgery. Henri has been going back regularly about every 3 to 4 months to perform major surgery prior to the pandemic. He has not been able to go back after his March 2020 visit due to COVID-19 restrictions but hopes to do so soon.



'This is where we are' by Karis Faith Samoutou. Showing the position of Republic of Congo on the continent of Africa.

## Ouesso Eye Hospital

Following the successful establishment of the Impfondo eye centre, New Sight was invited by local authorities to build a new eye hospital in Ouesso. The strategic location of Ouesso can make eye care accessible for the entire country of Congo. In November 2016, the purchase of the 6-hectare piece of land in Ouesso was completed, with one of the six hectares being a donation from the mayor's office in Ouesso. A team of topographic surveyors from Brazzaville completed land studies.

This future eye hospital is in a strategic location that can reach out to the whole of Congo, and perhaps even to neighbouring countries such as Cameroon and Central African Republic.



The initial plan for the Ouessou Hospital will include:

1. Inpatient Department
2. Outpatient Department
3. Optical shop and Workshop
4. Pharmacy
5. Surgical Unit
6. Core Infrastructure (electricity and water supply, incineration facility)

Subsequent extensions may include training facilities and staff & visitor quarters.

## Our Vision

In line with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and the World Health Organisation's (WHO) inclusion of eye care as an integral part of Universal Health Coverage (UHC), New Sight's Vision is:



'A world where no one is needlessly blind' by Karis Faith Samoutou

### A world

- where nobody is needlessly visually impaired
- where those with unavoidable visual loss can achieve their full potential
- where there is universal access to comprehensive eye care services

The WHO World Report on Vision,<sup>1</sup> published in October 2019, states that more than 2.2 billion people have a vision impairment or blindness, of whom at least 1 billion people do not have access to the services they need. Poor vision and eye health needs are expected to increase

**“A world where nobody is needlessly visually impaired”**

*-NEW SIGHT'S VISION*

substantially in the coming decades, with the number of people living with blindness projected to triple by 2050. The impact of vision loss cuts across many of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. Improving eye health helps to reduce poverty (Goal 1) and helps to deliver on quality inclusive education, gender equality and decent work and economic growth (Goals 4, 5 and 8). According to the WHO, worldwide, 4 in 5 people who are blind or severely

visually impaired are blind from avoidable causes. This means that we can prevent or treat their blindness. New Sight follows the technical guidance provided by the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness in collaboration with the WHO to plan, budget and purchase the equipment and consumables needed. The bulk of our charity's surgery is to remove cataracts. Patients blind from cataracts can see again the day after this one-off operation. When sight is restored, lives are transformed, not just for the patients, but also for their families and even the wider communities.

There have been several well-documented studies that proved cataract surgery to be one of the top operations with the most measurable improvement in quality of life,<sup>23</sup> and supported the argument that it offers economic benefit to relieve poverty.<sup>4 5 6</sup>

In addition to cataract surgery, we provide vision tests and aids (e.g. glasses), prevention and treatment of eye diseases and systemic illness involving the eye (e.g. diabetes and hypertension), an 'accident and emergency' service, as well as other surgeries (e.g. for glaucoma and pterygium). Free administration of Vitamin A supplements and River Blindness treatment are also offered. For those who are assessed to be genuinely unable to afford paying for our very low-cost non-profit services, their costs are covered by New Sight's charitable poverty fund.

## A year full of challenges and opportunities

The COVID-19 pandemic shifted New Sight's focus and way of life for much of 2020-21. The team urgently worked to support the community in Congo against the virus by promoting precautions and health education, assisting local health departments and seeking to provide sanitising or medical supplies to the neediest. New Sight set up a special fund set apart for COVID-19 Relief in Congo. The Ouessou Interim Eye Centre (IEC) continued to treat emergency cases as well as supporting long-term patients through the March to May lockdown. It reopened to receive in-person patients from May 2020.

For the year ended 31 March 2021, some key progress and activities included:

- New Sight's Ouessou IEC provided 1,354 consultations, or close to 3,000 since its establishment in July 2019.
- While we are in the process of constructing our new hospital, we have provided consultations from our Ouessou IEC, originally located in the Department of Health's health centre from July 2019 to October 2020, and relocated to new facilities since November 2020.
- New Sight has completed its first course on 'Introduction to Health Care Fundamentals', and completed its first theory component of the training program for students selected from the local community.
- We have an incredible core team of volunteers and pro-bono workers along with 17 full-time and 2 part-time staff.

- Local authorities have reaffirmed their ongoing support.
- New Sight has succeeded in raising more than HK\$6.7 million (USD 0.86 million / GBP 0.63 million) in this fiscal year. We entered 2021 financially poised to support the growth of our operations in Congo and to best serve our goal of eliminating avoidable blindness.

Three key goals for 2020/2021: 1. To provide accessible and comprehensive eye services; 2. Empower the local community; 3. Ensure sustainability by partnering with local and international partners.



'Ouesso Pioneer Team'  
by Karis Faith  
Samoutou.

## 1. Provide accessible & comprehensive eye services

New Sight worked hard to establish and equip the new Ouesso Interim Eye Centre, support the Impfondo Eye Centre through mentoring and consultation, and continued to pursue the most pragmatic approach to hospital construction in Ouesso.

### Ouesso Interim Eye Centre

Since we opened our Interim Eye Centre (IEC) in Ouesso in July 2019, we have been blessed to be able to use rooms within a local health centre, offered free to us by the Minister of Health. However, in November 2020 the government needed the building back and we were requested to move out. We relocated successfully to a newly built compound that month and our services and activities have transitioned smoothly without any interruptions. Since then, the IEC has settled well in the new location and we have promoted the move in the community with flyers and road signs.

Congo was in complete lockdown from 31 March until 15 May 2020. During this time, the IEC was limited to treating emergency cases and supporting long-term patients only. The IEC reopened on 22 May, initially for 3 days per week and now 4 days per week, with precautionary measures put in place to keep staff and patients safe from COVID-19. Patient numbers were understandably low for April and May. However, they increased in June when the IEC reopened part-time as the

country eased certain restrictions while it continued to fight COVID. The majority of patients were seen for follow-up care as we prioritised continuing care for our current patients as well as treating emergencies. Henri and Joyce also visited existing patients to distribute necessary medication.



'Examining a patient's eyes' by Karis Faith Samoutou.

The IEC has continued to thrive at the centrally located health centre space and at the newer and bigger facility from November 2020. By the end of March 2021, the IEC has provided a total of 3,000 consultations. We anticipate monthly patient numbers will return to our pre-COVID-19 level of around 200. As expected, the number of new and follow-up appointments has evened out, with close to half of appointments being new patients. This also reflects the fact that the team is getting a good response from people keeping their follow-up appointments, allowing treatment to be completed. So far, the most common eye conditions seen at the IEC have been eye infections, need for glasses, glaucoma, presbyopia, cataracts and allergic conjunctivitis.

### Impfondo Eye Centre

The eye centre in Impfondo continues to thrive and remains self-sufficient. Henri returned to Impfondo for another two-week surgical campaign in March 2020. Surgeries and problem cases awaited him, and he was able to operate on patients, helping to restore sight and bring new life to them and their families. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, Henri was not able to undertake more surgical campaigns since then, but has been advising the eye centre remotely.

### Construction Progress on Ouesso Eye Hospital

On the ground, hospital construction work was placed on hold while everyone focused on the COVID crisis and complied with the related restrictions. With the aim of moving forward as soon as possible, we began working with a team of pro-bono American engineers, experienced in designing and building hospitals in other African countries, to optimise the design as well as minimise costs.

Alongside this, we have been exploring more options to use local expertise. We hope that this will make maintenance more cost effective and easier to access, leading to better sustainability for the building.

We are excited by the progress being made and hope to see construction begin in the first half of 2021.

## 2. Empower the local community

With a view that education and training provide the most direct route to empowering the local community, New Sight has established a training school and is looking to conduct health education outreach when the situation with COVID allows. We will continue to help both the local health services and community to cope with the challenging situation.

### Training School (paid for by generous donors of New Sight)

The training school based at the IEC had to be temporarily closed from 18 March 2020 due to government regulations regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. Home learning packs were provided for each student but their ability to study at home was limited and most did not have phone or Internet access. The course restarted in June using a classroom lent by the Catholic school which was large enough to enable social distancing. We safely reopened the training school after lockdown.

In October we were informed that the rooms in the local clinic which housed the IEC would be needed for some services from the government hospital, which was being demolished. So the search was on to find new facilities. We were delighted to be able to rent a bigger building which could accommodate both the training school and the eye centre, and has the benefit of running water which we did not have at the previous site. We made and bought new furniture, and added security bars. The students and staff worked hard to clean the old and new sites. The IEC moved across in November and everyone has settled in well to the new facilities.

Our ten students continued to learn alongside qualified staff at the IEC. They attended each day and received a range of tuition including



'A classroom full of student nurses' by Karis Faith Samoutou.



classroom-based theory and practical teaching in the IEC. As well as nursing, the course covered spiritual development and general skills including IT and administration. We were excited to see their skills, knowledge and confidence grow. The students sat their final exams and marked the completion of the course through a celebratory lunch and graduation ceremony held in March 2021.

## COVID-19 Relief

The New Sight team has worked to empower the community with information about preventing the spread of COVID-19 and has supported and advised the local health authorities in their preparation.

As the threat of COVID-19 crept closer to Congo's borders, the New Sight team moved into action to do what they could to help the community to prepare and respond to a potential epidemic. Knowing the limits of the Congolese healthcare system, the team focussed on helping people to prevent the spread of the virus to keep themselves and others safe.

- Over 12,000 leaflets and posters were produced to educate people about the virus and how it spreads, and about how to wear face masks correctly.



'Congo United vs COVID-19' by Karis Faith Samoutou.

- The New Sight students wrote and produced a song called "Congo United vs COVID-19" in French and Lingala aimed at educating local people on how to protect themselves and avoid spreading the virus. This song was played on local radio as well as radio and TV stations across Congo. It was also made available online.

- Our design for hand-washing stations was used by the local community.
- The team adopted a cloth face mask design from Hong Kong and added localised instructions which could be manufactured from African fabric by the local tailors.

- Face masks were sent to Congo for our staff by the New Sight Hong Kong office.

- Essential supplies were provided to the Ouesso prison and the local Catholic mission.
- The Samoutous wrote and performed a radio play in English and French to educate people about COVID-19.

- Seminars were given to local leaders and radio interviews were aired to educate about COVID-19.
- The eye centre team contacted patients to rearrange follow up appointments and dispense repeat medication just before lockdown began.

A COVID-19 Relief Fund was established to raise funds specifically to help with the response to the pandemic in Congo. Thanks to the amazing generosity of our supporters, we have been able to provide important relief supplies to the community. HKD 638,000 (GBP 6380) was raised, and part of the funds was used to purchase the following items for the first shipment from Hong Kong to Ouessou:

- 100 thermometers
- 30 oxygen pulse oximeters
- Batteries for the equipment
- 20,000 copies of instruction on proper mask wearing

These were shipped to Congo along with the following donated items:

- 20,000 reusable face masks
- 20 face shields

In addition, the following were purchased from local traders and donated to the community via the Préfet (Prefect, or Governor) and the Commission against COVID-19:

- 5,000 fabric masks were made locally in Ouessou and donated to all the students sitting exams and market traders in Ouessou.
- 108 buckets and basin-and-soap systems were made and shipped from Brazzaville to cover all classrooms of public schools in Ouessou.

In August, we received the long-awaited delivery from Hong Kong and presented our contribution to Mr Gilbert Mouanda-Mouanda, the Préfet of the La Sangha region and Mr Abel Sibobe Gah, the Central Mayor of Ouessou. In collaboration with the World Health Organisation, the Director of the Department of Health distributed this much-needed aid among the people and clinics of the region.



'A beautiful bouquet of masks' by Karis Faith Samoutou.

### 3. Ensure sustainability by partnering with local and international partners

New Sight continued to strengthen relationships with local authorities, and work towards best practice communications, fundraising, team structure and operational processes.

#### Engagement with Local Authorities

New Sight continues to operate under a Protocole d'accord signed with the Ministry of Health of Republic of Congo which covers performance as a health institution and provides for tax exemptions, visas and work permits.

#### Commission against COVID-19

When the COVID-19 outbreak hit Congo, we were in a unique position to help with medical expertise and provide supplies. Joyce was invited by the Préfet and the Director of Health to join the committee leading the response in the La Sangha region. Through our amazing and generous supporters, we managed to raise HKD 638,000 (GBP 6,380) in our COVID-19 appeal which enabled us to provide cloth masks, soap, disinfectant, buckets, and toilet paper for the community. We also received a generous in-kind donation of 20,000 reusable masks, making the givings we received to be worth over HKD1 million.

We know that there are so many needs in the Republic of Congo and we are privileged to be able to play a part. The more we get to know the community, the more we can see that establishing the New Sight Eye Hospital will bring so much hope and tangible help here.

#### Ouesso Pioneer Team

The Dunys successfully completed their 18-month mission in Congo and returned to the UK in December 2020. Ruth set up and ran the school for the missionary kids while Jean Marc worked on administration and training our staff and students. They poured their heart and soul in their work, serving the community through the Ouesso Pioneers' church planting efforts, offering homework help and supporting local families, as well as running programs for abandoned elderly and children. The skills, experience and love that they brought have been invaluable.

#### Dr Joyce Samoutou-Wong Awarded the 2020 Compassion Award

In December 2020, Joyce Samoutou was honoured to receive the prestigious Compassion Award. Established by the Hong Kong Taiwanese & Macao Charity Fund and currently in its 15th year, the award commends individuals who model kindness and compassion for society. In her heartfelt acceptance speech, Joyce thanked her supporters and expressed her wish to dedicate the generous prize of US\$150,000 entirely to the running of the IEC and construction of the Ouesso Hospital.



'Mummy is Compassion Champion' by Karis Faith Samoutou.

Joyce collected the award at a grand award ceremony in Hong Kong on 20 December 2020, organised and produced by Phoenix Satellite TV, Taiwan Modern Finance Foundation and Beijing East-West Charity Forum.

### Reconnecting in Hong Kong

While in Hong Kong to receive the Compassion Award, Joyce was able to connect with many supporters and friends. She came with the desire to encourage but found herself being refreshed and strengthened by everyone's care and support in return.

### Reaching out

Outside of our clinic work, the team have been making connections and seeking to serve our community in other ways. At Christmas, we brought food and other supplies to the prison, inpatients at the local hospital, and the Catholic mission where they care for elderly and young families in need.

### Community partnerships

Ouessou has recently welcomed several new dignitaries: a new Prefect, Mr Gilbert Mouanda-Mouanda; a new Central Mayor, Mr Abel Sidobe Gah; a new mayor of the Nzanlangoye district, Ms. Irene Andziou; and a new Director of the Department of Health, Dr Faustin Kebele. The New Sight team of Henri and Joyce Samoutou, Siko Bambemba, Jean Marc Dunys, and engineer, Spencer Lherisson have had the privilege of meeting all of them to discuss our work. Each new leader has expressed and demonstrated their support for New Sight. We look forward to building strong and fruitful partnerships with all.

### Fun and inspiring videos from the Samoutou family

The Samoutou family produced a number of video messages to encourage and inspire supporters around the world. All are invited to share these videos with their church, Sunday school, fellowship groups, schools and other communities (in person or online).

1. [\*\*Introduction to New Sight Eye Care\*\*](#) (5 min): Outlining the family's story and New Sight's ministry in Africa.



2. **Sermon "Reasons for Hope: A feel-good message from the Congo jungle"** (36 min): Joyce speaks on trusting in God, a message that she and Henri are inspired to share as we face the upheavals of 2020.
3. **Top 10 Stories from the African Rainforest by the Samoutou Kids** (23 min) - The Three Musketeers share interesting tales from their lives in Gabon and Congo. And what curious prayer requests!
4. **Stories from the African rainforest by Joyce and Henri Samoutou** (21 min) - the adults share their stories and prayer requests

### **Joyce's first Facebook Live!**

While in Hong Kong, Joyce hosted her first **Facebook Live** event on Wednesday, 16 Dec, 9 pm HK (GMT +8) time. Attended by over 80 friends, supporters and their families, and garnering over 2,000 views, she was able to share the Samoutou family's experiences, New Sight's achievements, and their collective adventures through informal chat, Q&A and quizzes.

### **Collection and warehousing by Columbia**

Columbia International Removals continue to provide free use of their container warehouse, packing, pick up and transportation services for all equipment, furniture and household items.

### **Air Freight to Congo in March and August 2020**

Essential medical and non-medical equipment, and household items were sent by air freight to Congo on 30 March 2020. Important community relief supplies, made available through New Sight's COVID-19 Relief Fund, were shipped out to Congo in August 2020. There have been added difficulties in logistics because of COVID-19 restrictions, reduced cargo plane frequency, and borders and airports of transit points in Ethiopia and Congo being closed.

### **Birthday and individual fundraising campaigns**

Joyce, her parents and several supporters have turned their birthdays into donation campaigns for New Sight. Others also contributed through personal fundraising campaigns such as sponsored marathons, trail runs and sky diving, as well as making and selling beautiful African fabric bags and hair scrunchies.

Joyce and Cherissa embarked on a mother-and-daughter "Climbing for Sight" fundraising challenge in which they conquered Mount Everest virtually over 30 days in March 2021. They climbed 3,871 flights of stairs (58,065 steps), equivalent to the 8,558-metre target.

## 2021 Trees for Sight calendar sale

Karis, Ezra and Cherissa Samoutou once again made a calendar with the help of their friends, and this year they featured trees in Africa. They said "Trees remind us that we can grow, adapt, and find beauty in each season. Above all, just like New Sight, trees are life-giving!" This was the third year of calendar sales with around one-half sold and the rest given away to major donors and stakeholders. Design and production of the calendar was again a donation from QP Group. The main goal was to reconnect with supporters, provide a year-round reminder, and help to raise profile. All photographs were provided by supporters and chosen by the Ouesso Pioneer kids in Congo. Despite the impact from social distancing due to COVID-19, sales generated more than HK\$41,400 in funds.

## Marketing Subcommittee

The PwC Experience team continues to assist and advise in our production of new introductory videos, now available in English, Cantonese and Mandarin. The team also continues to advise us on our video production in Ouesso.

## Legal advisory teams

New Sight continues to be supported with pro-bono legal, governance and compliance advisory from Allen and Overy, and Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld in Hong Kong, and Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP in the US.

## The amazing support of churches, schools and corporations

New Sight's work is made possible by the kind donations from generous individuals and caring organisations such as:

CHURCHES	SCHOOLS	CORPORATIONS
Alliance International Church	Baptist Lui Ming Choi Secondary School	Dr Alan Ng
Aspire Church	Diocesan Boys' School	Healing Hope
Christian Church of Divine Providence	Diocesan Girls' Junior School	Little Pianists
EFCC Kong Fok Church	Diocesan Girls' School	Optical 88
Kowloon Tong Alliance Church	Funful Group of Schools	Prestique Limited
Island Evangelical Community Church	Island School	QP Group
North Point Alliance Church	St Paul's Co-Educational College	Solar-Med
Union Church Hong Kong	Ying Wa Girls' School	
United Brethren Baptist Church		
The Vine Church		



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<sup>1</sup> 'World report on vision'. WHO, 2019. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/world-report-on-vision>

<sup>2</sup> Javitt JC, Venkataswamy G, Sommer A. 'The economic and social impact of restoring sight'. In: Henkind P (ed) ACTA: 24th International Congress of Ophthalmology. Philadelphia, PA: JB Lippincott, 1983.

<sup>3</sup> International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment. Annual Report 2004. <http://www.icevi.org/publications/Annual%20Report%202004.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> Javitt et al. Int. Ophthalmol. 1983: 1308-1312.

<sup>5</sup> Kuper et al. 'Does Cataract surgery alleviate poverty? Evidence from a Multi-Centre Intervention Study Conducted in Kenya, the Philippines and Bangladesh'. PloS Medicine 2010; 5.11.

<sup>6</sup> Faal and Gilbert. 'Convincing governments to act: VISION 2020 and the Millennium Development Goals'. Community Eye Health. 2007 December; 20(64): 62–64.