

## Joyce and Henri Samoutou – Co-founders, New Sight



Joyce Samoutou-Wong and Henri Samoutou are the founders of the charity New Sight, which serves the Republic of Congo. They are the 2012 joint winners of the international Excellence in Ophthalmology Vision award.

Joyce, a native of Hong Kong, won a full scholarship to study at the United World College of the Atlantic in the UK. Joyce then read medicine at the University of Edinburgh, which was followed by a stint as a visiting fellow at Harvard University. She has been involved in several humanitarian projects across the globe, including running a mobile clinic and pioneering a successful first aid program along the ancient Silk Road in Uzbekistan. She is a recipient of the Hong Kong Outstanding Students' Award (1992), the Women of Hope Award (2017), and the Compassion Award (2020). Joyce is an inspirational and sought-after speaker known for her sincerity and natural ability to make the audience both laugh and cry; she has been invited to speak in several countries to audiences, such as the Royal Geographic Society, TEDx Women, and Harvard Club. New Sight's fundraising events are routinely sold out.

Henri was born in a village in the depths of the Gabonese rainforest. Despite multiple devastating tragedies in the family, against all odds, he successfully completed his nursing studies with the financial support of a generous American missionary couple. He then won a full scholarship from Christian Blind Mission to study eye surgery in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo. He has dedicated his life to giving sight, through service in missionary hospitals, Salvation Army surgical campaigns and Mercy Ship, the largest charity hospital ship in the world.

In 2006, Joyce and Henri relocated from the UK to develop a non-profit eye centre in a missionary hospital in the rainforest of Gabon. The eye centre has since become self-sufficient and continues to help around 6,000 patients a year. In 2012, the couple founded New Sight, and together with their three young children, moved to northern Republic of Congo to pioneer its first non-profit eye centre with surgery. New Sight provides full non-profit eye services including consultations, glasses, medical and surgical treatments, as well as free screening and community eye education in the villages. New Sight also empowers the local community by training nurses and support staff. In 2016, at the invitation of the local authorities, they embarked on plans to build a dedicated eye hospital in Ouessou, Congo, on a 6-hectare area. In 2019, they moved to Ouessou and established their second eye centre in Congo. Since then, they have started the country's first facility to manufacture prescription glasses locally, as well as providing a free children's magazine to educate and inform children around the country, currently with 22,000 readers in over 30 schools nationwide. Construction of the eye block of the hospital took place from 2022 to 2024, and it is expected to be open by the end of 2025.

Joyce and Henri are passionate about transforming lives by giving the priceless gift of sight. They are also passionate about empowering children locally and internationally through their work with Congo schools, as well as the Project Two Front Teeth, which they founded with their children. The meaningful work of Joyce and Henri has been featured in the BBC and *South China Morning Post* and was the subject of a documentary series by Hong Kong's Cable TV. In 2017 and in 2023, the Samoutous were invited to the Forbes Philanthropy Summit in New York.