

# Brighter futures

Impact report 2022/23



sense  
international



# Our work



Can you imagine a world where sight and hearing are not your reliable guides?

People with deafblindness have a combination of sight and hearing loss. Often, they have other physical or learning disabilities too. Without support, everyday tasks like communicating, working or simply moving around are huge challenges.

It is even tougher for people with deafblindness living in the countries we work in. They are more likely to live in poverty and be unemployed. They face multiple barriers, including lack of access to healthcare, education, vocational training and opportunities to participate in their community.

Sense International is a leading global charity, determined to break down the barriers that exclude people with disabilities. We are dedicated to supporting people with deafblindness to live, learn and thrive.

- **Our vision** is of a world in which all people with deafblindness are equal and active members of society.
- **Our mission** is to ensure, with the help of partner organisations and direct input from people with deafblindness, that barriers in societies and systems are removed. We want everyone to be fully included and able to fulfil their potential.
- **Our work** ensures children with deafblindness are identified as early as possible and enables people with deafblindness to access healthcare, education, training and work, so they can thrive.







Romania

India

Nepal

Bangladesh

Uganda

Kenya

Tanzania

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To help us achieve our vision, in 2022/23 we focused on three strategic objectives:

- **Innovate:** support people with deafblindness to be included in national systems.
- **Inform:** provide people with deafblindness, and the people who support them, with more information, skills and knowledge.
- **Influence:** ensure people with deafblindness are recognised in laws, policies and budgets.

# Growing our impact

Sense International has delivered another year of great achievements.

Over the last year, we screened more than 60,000 children for deafblindness through our early intervention projects.

We supported 7,939 children with deafblindness and complex disabilities to access education.

We supported 1,205 young people with vocational training. For some this meant leading a more independent life, for others it was an opportunity to earn a living for themselves.

We trained 8,774 people to better understand and support deafblindness.

As well as this, we have influenced national policies to ensure the inclusion of people with deafblindness, now and for future generations.

All of this would not have been accomplished without the dedication of our teams across the world. None of it would have been possible without the vital support we receive from our donors.

These remain challenging times for the international development sector. The effects of Covid-19, economic pressures and a rising cost of living have deepened the financial constraints faced by the sector in a way that cannot be underestimated.

The Second Global Report on Deafblindness, launched this year, highlights the inequalities faced by people with deafblindness and how much more work we must do.

In 2024, we celebrate Sense International's 30th Anniversary. We are more determined than ever to continue our vital work in ensuring that individuals with deafblindness are not only included, but are enabled to truly realise their full potential.



**Rex Shah**  
Chair of Sense International



**Richard Kramer**  
CEO of Sense and Sense International



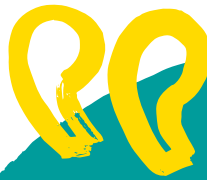
## Mealim's inspiring progress

Early in her infancy, Mealim began suffering from seizures.

After months of searching for answers and numerous visits to medical facilities, Mealim's parents were told there was an issue with her brain which meant there was no connection between the right and left sides.

Despite being told there was nothing that could be done, her parents Mwamikas and Mohamed refused to give up hope. For years, they coped with the situation on their own, feeling frustrated and helpless.

This changed when a community health volunteer recommended Sense International Kenya's sensory screening program in Kwale. Mealim was then also diagnosed with cerebral palsy, club foot and deafblindness. It was a lot for her parents to take in, but it meant that Mealim was finally referred for therapy.



**I thought my baby was never going to get better but since coming here, I can feel some of the worry has lifted from my heart. I can hope again."**

Mealim's mother

Through physiotherapy, Mealim has been working on stability, positioning and muscle strengthening exercises. She's also been enjoying sensory stimulation through playful activities with light toys and music.

The progress Mealim has made is truly inspiring. She started off unable to move her neck or body, and can now sit for short periods and grip objects.





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**Last year we screened over 60,000 children for deafblindness.**

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# Early intervention



From the moment a child is born, they need to communicate. Early identification of deafblindness is vital so children can get the support they need as soon as possible. In many countries, health services lack the capacity, equipment and trained staff to do this.

We work with health professionals and governments so more children can be supported now and in the future. This includes:

- Showing how screening and testing systems can be established through partnering with local health services and ministries of health.
- Training health workers and community health volunteers to identify children with deafblindness or other complex disabilities. We ensure children are referred for therapy and, if appropriate, provided with assistive devices including hearing aids and glasses.
- Showing how children with deafblindness can learn from multi-sensory stimulation. This practice encourages children to make use of all their senses to explore, discover and learn through special lighting, sound and tactile toys.
- Supporting parents and caregivers to gain the skills to nurture their child's development in the home.



## Key achievements



### India

3,967 children were screened for deafblindness, 49 received early intervention support.



### Kenya

48,532 children were screened for deafblindness. We were able to screen large numbers this year due to an additional 30 community health volunteers being assigned to screening.



### Peru

3 sensory stimulation rooms were established, with our support, in the regions of Ica, Apurimac and Tumbes, to provide therapy support to students with disabilities enrolled in schools.



## Gani's exploration begins

Little Gani was born with partial vision, quadriplegia and microcephaly.

Gani's parents first visited our centre in South Goa, India anxious to know why he couldn't balance his neck and didn't respond to stimulation.

We have supported Gani and his parents with assessments, development plans and counselling, as well as guiding his parents in applying for disability welfare schemes.

With this support, we have seen incredible progress in just one year. As Gani's mother told us:

“My child has begun to hold his neck up and move it from side to side without letting his head drop. Gani has also started reaching out for small toys and is comfortable being held by his special educator and physiotherapist.”





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# Inclusive education

7,939 children received educational support.

Every child has the right to an education, but children with deafblindness are too often denied the chance to learn and develop their potential.

We help facilitate learning for children with deafblindness by:

- Working closely with families, schools, colleges and governments to ensure children with deafblindness get the education they deserve.
- Developing community support for children so they can learn in the place that suits them best, whether this is home-based, centre-based or in a mainstream school with support from a learning support assistant.
- Providing appropriate technology, adapted school facilities, specialist curricula and learning materials to support both teachers and parents.



# Dorcas's journey from uncertainty to independence



By the time Dorcas was 18 months old, her mother, Amani, had noticed she was missing key developmental milestones. Unfortunately, Dorcas's local schools in Kenya didn't have the necessary facilities to support her, so Dorcas ended up missing out on years of schooling.

When Dorcas was 11, Amani found out about a nearby education centre where children with disabilities could be assessed and supported into school placements. It was at this centre that Dorcas was diagnosed with hearing loss, low vision and cerebral palsy. Dorcas's mum recalled:

"I was devastated but the assessor reassured me by telling me about Sense International and how Dorcas could benefit. My prayers were answered!

Dorcas could not read or write, her

mobility was limited and her social skills were poor. But I was told there would be a learning support assistant employed to support Dorcas in school. The better part is that the assistant would be a lady from my community, called Binti.

Dorcas has now been supported by Binti for two years. I'm so proud of how much Dorcas's speech has improved, as well as her academic performance. She has started to write and recite the alphabet.

Sense International also provided Dorcas with a walking frame and she has friends who walk her to school and back, which has really helped with her mobility and confidence.

My village community all thought Dorcas would never go to school; let alone all the things she is doing now independently!"

## Key achievements



### Uganda

55 children were supported by learning support assistants.



### Bangladesh

157 children were supported to access education through regional resource centres and our home-based education programme.



### Romania

A national conference on education, organised by Sense International Romania, was attended by over 60 people, including representatives of the Ministry of Education, partner special schools and universities.



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# Vocational training

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Like anyone their age, young people with deafblindness want to be as independent as possible, to earn a living and contribute towards their families and communities. Empowering young people with deafblindness to run their own small businesses not only fosters independence, but also breaks down stereotypes and paves the way for a more inclusive society.

We do this by:

- Working with governments, training colleges and partners to set up high-quality vocational training.
- Helping young people join training centres, become apprentices, make business plans and start their own small enterprises.
- Connecting people with deafblindness with advisers and local business support schemes.

## Key achievements



### Bangladesh

12 participants in our apprenticeships secured employment in trades such as sewing, carpentry and IT.



### Kenya

18 microentrepreneurs were supported with business growth kits and are now reporting tripling and doubling of profit margins.



### Peru

We were awarded the national 'Inclusivity and Disability' award by the national authority on disability in Peru, for the second year running.



1,205 young people were supported with vocational training and livelihoods.

## Kumaresh: Empowered to thrive

Meet Kumaresh, a remarkable 16-year-old boy from a village in the Satkhira district of Bangladesh. Despite the challenges he faced as the eldest child of day laborer parents, Kumaresh's determination shines through.

Aged two, Kumaresh was diagnosed with deafblindness. His parents bought him glasses to improve his vision. However, they couldn't afford a hearing aid for him, which made communication challenging.

Kumaresh is widely known in his community for being incredibly studious

but, sadly, he had to leave school in the fifth grade due to difficulties understanding his teachers and peers.

Things took a turn for the better when Kumaresh enrolled in a Sense International UK Aid-funded training program. Through this initiative, he received a clinical assessment, was prescribed a hearing aid and received a new pair of glasses. He was also able to continue his education from home.

We connected Kumaresh with a motorcycle repair service and supported him in enrolling in

a motorcycle servicing training program under the guidance of a local master craftsperson.

Now, Kumaresh has the opportunity to earn a living and gain independence. And his confidence is soaring:

"I never thought anything good would happen to me, but after joining the workshop, I feel like I can achieve anything. Now, I have found a guiding hand."



# Advocacy and research

The voices of people with deafblindness must be heard by decision-makers and wider society. This is essential if we are to break down the barriers that prevent people with deafblindness from living to their full potential.

Advocacy is key to achieving system change and sustainability. We help push for change for people with deafblindness by:

- Supporting people with deafblindness to advocate for their rights.
- Building relationships with governments and decision-makers to ensure people with deafblindness are included.



## Mwanasha's international advocacy

At ten years old Mwanasha was diagnosed with a benign brain tumour. During an operation to remove the tumour, her nerves were injured, leaving her with deafblindness.

School was tough for Mwanasha, as her teachers did not know sign language and, with limited vision, she struggled to read. She left school early but was determined to establish a career for herself.



With investment from Sense International Tanzania, Mwanasha set up a soap and detergent business in 2017. We also provided Mwanasha with glasses to improve her vision. Since then, Mwanasha is proud that her business has been a success:

“It has proved to the community that people with disabilities can take care of ourselves and our families, and we can contribute to our communities.”

In November 2022, Sense International Tanzania funded Mwanasha to attend the World Federation of Deafblindness Conference in Nairobi, Kenya. This was the first time Mwanasha had ever left Tanzania. As she explains:

“I felt incredibly proud to be the only participant from Tanzania. I loved meeting so many different people from other countries and we have kept in contact.

I was also surprised to realise for the first time that people from other countries experience very much the same problems I do. I felt such a strong sense

of community among the people with deafblindness I met at the conference.”

Following the conference, Mwanasha has started looking into opportunities to learn English and how to use a computer. She knows this would make participating in future international conferences much easier for her. Mwanasha says:

“If I could give one message to people with deafblindness across Tanzania it would be to come together and unite to face our shared struggle. We are much stronger together.”



## Key achievements



### Romania

Early intervention was formally embedded into the Romania education system after ten years of advocacy. Our model is being used as an example of best practice.



### India

We produced the ‘A-Z of Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 Guide’, so the people we support can easily understand their rights.



### Nepal

Due to the advocacy of our partners in Nepal, the Ministry of Education established a first-of-its-kind programme to support resource classes for children with deafblindness.





## Shaban's family discovers hope

Shaban lives with his parents, his brother and two aunts near Dar es Salaam, in Tanzania.

Born prematurely at just 28 weeks, Shaban faced a steep uphill battle from the start. His mother, Ester, noticed that Shaban wasn't achieving key developmental milestones like walking and talking.

Due to Shaban's disability, Ester felt increasing isolation from her local community and mounting despair over his prospects. However, obtaining a proper diagnosis proved to be a frustrating process.

A turning point arrived when Shaban was referred to their local hospital. Here, our team

of trained healthcare workers stepped in, conducting comprehensive tests of Shaban's sight and hearing. This led to a definitive diagnosis of deafblindness and Shaban was referred for early intervention therapy.

For the past eight months, Shaban has been meeting with a specialized occupational therapist on a weekly basis. Using toys, equipment and physiotherapy, his therapist has been instrumental in helping Shaban develop his muscles and communication skills. Simple tasks like grasping toys have become more manageable and Shaban is gradually gaining more independence in his daily activities, such as brushing his teeth, feeding himself and holding a pen.

Shaban has also learned to use a communication board, which enables him to express his needs and access information. His progress has not only transformed his life but also rekindled Ester's hope. She remarked:

"It was so good to meet other women with children like mine. This gave me strength and encouraged me to learn how to support my child better."

At Sense International, we firmly believe that every child with deafblindness deserves to experience the fullness of life. Through our work, we aspire to turn this belief into a tangible reality for children like Shaban.

# A word from our partners



We are so delighted to support Sense International and have seen first-hand the impact of their work on the lives of children and families.

By supporting a global education programme, we want to reach all corners of the world, from providing education and training in schools and within the home to sharing resources directly into the hands of people who need them the most. Through the use of technology, sharing expertise and breaking down the barriers that so

many people with deafblindness face, we hope to bring long lasting change. We are excited about the next journey Sense International is embarking on and are ambitious about the opportunities we can help them. Together, we can ensure a fairer and more inclusive world for people with deafblindness.

**The Nelumbo Foundation**

## Looking ahead

Over the years, we have improved the quality of life of millions of people with deafblindness and their families through our ground-breaking services. Our advocacy work has shaped policy and legislation around the world, improving both disability rights and people's lives. Most importantly, we involve people with deafblindness and their families to help us understand their individual needs, and inform our programmes and approaches. Our impact is huge. But we have much more to do.

Shifting systems takes time but when it happens it can be transformational. With a new five-year strategy, we will be focusing on three important themes of innovation, influence and informing to reach even more children, young people, adults and families.

Collaboration will be vital, and that includes our partners and supporters. Together, we can build a brighter future for people with deafblindness. Together, we can ensure no one is left behind.





# Major supporters

We are indebted to all the donors listed below for their support, both financial and otherwise. Without this support it would not have been possible for us to help so many people with deafblindness to fulfil their potential. We are particularly grateful to those who have made unrestricted donations in the year.

British & Foreign School Society

CareTech Foundation

Comic Relief

Else Kröner-Fresenius-Stiftung

Enabel, the Belgian Development Agency  
(funded by the European Union)

Foreign, Commonwealth and  
Development Office (FCDO)

Guernsey Overseas Aid &  
Development Commission

Jaspar Foundation

Jersey Overseas Aid

Kilimanjaro Blind Trust Africa

Laduma Dhamecha Charitable Trust

Lavelle Fund for the Blind, Inc.

Medicor Foundation

National Lottery Community Fund

Nelumbo Foundation

Orange Foundation

Rupin and Madhavi Vadera

Sense International Ambassadors'  
Circle Members

The Commonwealth Foundation

The Evan Cornish Foundation

The Souter Charitable Trust

The Hollyhock Charitable Foundation

The Rainford Trust

The Stavros Niarchos Foundation

The Princess Anne's Charities Trust

The Karlsson Játiva Charitable Foundation

Tony and Audrey Watson Charitable Trust

UN Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund

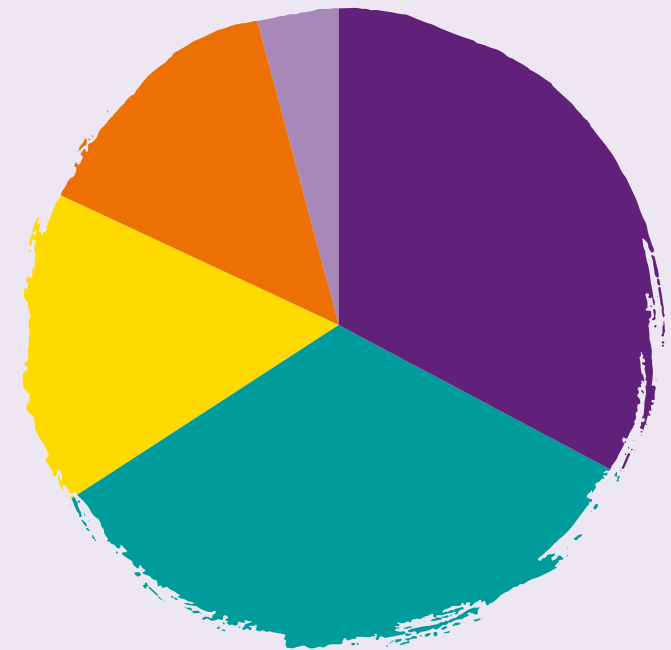
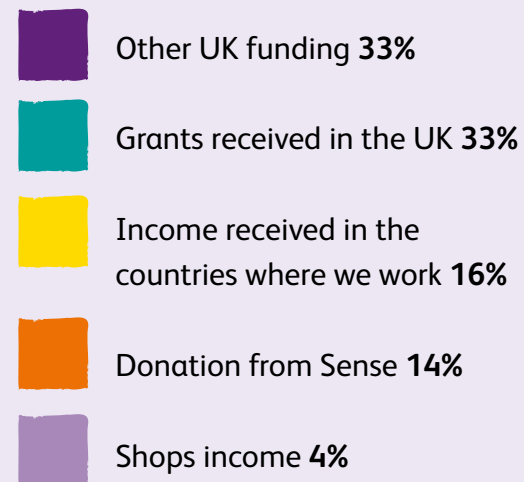
# Finance

Sense International works in eight countries, delivering projects that span early intervention, inclusive education and vocational training. We also undertake research and advocacy, reaching thousands of people each year.

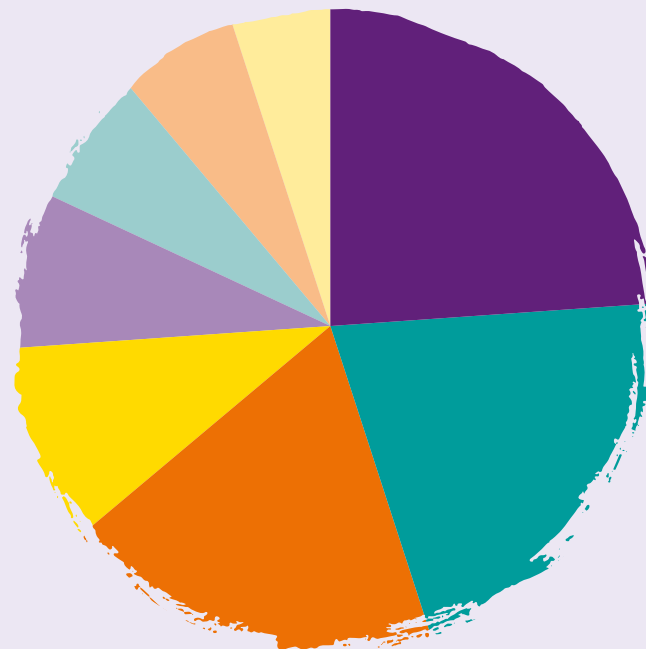
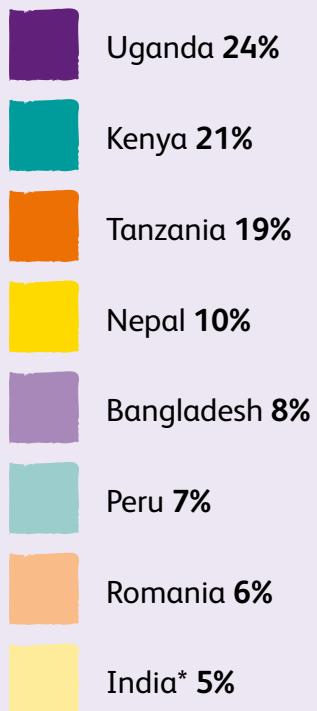
In 2022/23, overall income fell to £2.3 million from £2.5million in the previous year. The proportion of expenditure used for generating further income was 7p in every pound. Expenditure increased from £2.5 million to £3.0 million.

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## Income was received from the following sources in 2022/23:



## Sense International 2022/23 expenditure by country:



\*Sense International India is an independent charity that raises its own funds. Its expenditure on programmes in India is not included in these figures. Sense International UK is represented on the Board of Sense International India, and we work together to implement programmes in Bangladesh and Nepal.



If you, or someone you know, requires this information in a different format, such as large print or braille, please contact us using the details below.

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Registered charity number  
1076497

  
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With your support, we can transform the lives of children like Shaban. Together, we can ensure that every child, regardless of disability, can experience a life filled with learning, growth, and endless possibilities.

