



## SERVICE PROJECT SHEET Vision Aid Overseas



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Project Name:  
**Vision Aid Overseas (VAO)**  
(Registered Charity 1081695)

Project goal:  
To assist VAO, which is dedicated to helping people in developing countries whose lives are blighted by poor eyesight, particularly in those cases where spectacles can help.

Rotary service type:  
Fund-raising. Collecting old spectacles.

Unique selling proposition:  
Helping the world to see.

Description:  
Rotarians collect unwanted spectacles but are asked not to collect those that are broken, in bad condition (bent, yellowed-plastic or with badly-scuffed lenses), varifocals, bifocals, loose lenses, spectacle cases or empty frames.

The spectacles should be packed in a sturdy cardboard box (with a compliment slip from the Rotary Club) and taken to "large optical modules" (that is the best-known national opticians in most High Streets) who patronise a specialist Optical Courier Service which collects and delivers all spectacles to Crawley, free of charge – for more details, see website below.

From there, the spectacles are sent to prisons, where prisoners trained by VAO determine their prescription and sort and label them. They are then packed and shipped overseas, accompanied by volunteer groups of trained optometrists. The volunteers each pay up to £600 towards the project costs.

In the target countries, which include Zambia, Ghana, Malawi, Ethiopia and India, the teams establish clinics and carry out eye tests for people in need. They then dispense the correct spectacles.

VAO also trains nurses and other health workers in the target countries as well as donating optical instruments to enable the countries gradually to do more for themselves.

In the receiving country, the Vision Aid Overseas teams travel for two weeks at a time, holding eye clinics, and dispensing spectacles as required. As a result of the collection and re-cycling, someone is able to make far more of their life.

Why fundraise for VAO?  
It is estimated that millions of people in developing countries simply need a pair of spectacles to lead a normal life. After a visit by a VAO team, a young mother who has never seen her baby properly may be able to do so. A man who could no longer work as a tailor because he could not thread his needle may be able to earn a living again. A small boy who could not see the blackboard at school may be able to benefit from his education.

- £1 could provide for a pair of spectacles to enable a person to see again.
- £350 pays the air freight costs of spectacles for one project.
- £2,000-£5,000 pays for a project that could transform the lives of 2,000 people with spectacles.

Essential optical instruments, which are used in the clinics are always needed and the costs are:

Trial set of Lenses	£1,000
Tonometer	£900
Battery Focimeter	£750
Retinoscope	£350
Ophthalmoscope	£250
Frame Heater	£200

Providing spectacles must be one of the most cost-effective ways of transforming people's lives. The results of VAO's work are immediate and dramatic.

Benefits to club:

To 'see' the benefits of this project, get all the Rotarians in the Club to attend a meeting without wearing their spectacles. Ask them how many meetings a year could they attend without their spectacles. They will then 'see' the benefits to the target countries.

This project gets members out and about in the community. It is an opportunity to be of service, collecting unwanted items that can help others.

You can get media coverage by seeing how many spectacles your club president can wear at once.

Feedback from clubs:

The following clubs are members of VAO, (i.e. they pay a subscription) and are strong supporters:

- Benfleet
- Brechin
- Brighton
- Portsmouth & Southsea
- Southampton East
- Wells

Contact for further information:

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or your District International Service Chairman.

Rotary International in Great Britain and Ireland has adopted this statement of policy for its work with children, the elderly, the vulnerable and those with disability. The needs and rights of the child, the elderly, the vulnerable and persons with disability take priority. It is the duty of every Rotarian to safeguard to the best of his or her ability, the welfare of and prevent the physical, sexual or emotional abuse and neglect of all children, the elderly, persons with disability or otherwise vulnerable persons with whom they come into contact in their Rotarian duties. Rotarians should refer to the detailed "RIBI Protection Policy" when planning events and activities.