

# We open eyes.



## What would you do without your eyesight?

**Have you ever thought about how different your life would have been without your eyesight? You may have never been able to see the people who are close to you. Your parents, your brothers and sisters, your partner, your children, your friends... None of them.**

**What job would you learn to do? How would you get through the day? What would you do in your free time? What hobbies would you have? Would you play any sports? Would you travel?**

These are thought-provoking questions, and the answer to all of them is: Our lives would be very different without the power of sight!

My name is Markus Hackenberg. I live in Neuss. I am married and have two daughters. Even as a child, I often went on journeys of discovery, which probably laid the foundation for my later hobbies of travel and mountaineering. I have been able to gather many impressions on my travels, some were wonderful, some were breath taking, but others got me thinking. Poverty and illness were and are often key issues in many of the regions I visited.

Not least, thanks to the often-indecribable support from local people, particularly during my mountain tours. Since my return, I have supported various social projects in the regions I visited. I wanted to give

something back for the support and assistance I have received. When I turned 50 a few weeks ago, my attention was drawn to an issue I have always had in mind, so I thought of organising a fundraising campaign for a larger project in a country I have often visited for the sake of mountaineering.

This is how the project **#OpenEyes4Uganda** started in close collaboration with the Christian Blind Mission (CBM). I have been familiar with CBM and have supported it for years. I became aware of this organization thanks to the TV fundraising gala "A Heart for Kids".

CBM is a non-profit development aid organization that aims to improve the quality of life of people with disabilities, with a special focus on helping those with visual impairment in developing countries, offering them medical care and treatment such as cataract surgeries. Cataracts often hits older people, but also affect children, and no without any treatment, this would lead to complete blindness. Even though cataracts are the most common cause of blindness in developing countries, they are also the easiest to treat.

Why decide to support a project in Uganda? Climbing the Mountains of the Moon in Western Uganda and their highest peak, the 5,109m high Margherita Peak, has been a long-held wish of mine. Deserted wilderness and fascinating natural landscapes characterise the wonderful mountains of Uganda. At the same time, this

country is one of the poorest in the world. Large sections of the population are affected by illnesses, especially eye diseases. My project **#OpenEyes4Uganda** is intended to draw attention to the people affected by eye conditions or threatened with blindness and to improve the provision of eye care to the population, which will give me personally the opportunity to discover this fascinating landscape with my own eyes.

During the search with CBM for an aid project in Uganda, I became aware of the Mengo clinic in Kampala, the capital city of Uganda. This facility successfully treats eye diseases, such as glaucoma. The demand for operations is so high that the existing capacities have to be expanded urgently. Plans to develop the ophthalmic clinic are already in the process. A co-operation with the University Clinic of Saarland has already been agreed on, to ensure the training of the urgently required ophthalmologists.

After a thorough examination of the situation, I have decided to support this project and collect donations for the expansion of the ophthalmic clinic and the associated improvement of eye care provision.

I would like to visit the Mengo clinic in person as part of my mountain tour - probably in early 2020 and would like to encourage as many people and co-operations as possible to donate. Until then, I will keep everyone supporting this project and everyone interested in it up to date on its progress regularly.

Would you like to be part of a project that is willing to offer better prospects to many children and adults with impaired vision in Uganda? **Then please make a donation for the expansion of the Mengo clinic in Kampala, Uganda!**

You can simply use the donation button on this webpage. The donations' indicator shows the total funds we have raised.

Thank you very much for your support in advance!

Asante Sana (many thanks in Swahili!) and kind regards

Markus Hackenberg

## **The Department of Ophthalmology in Mengo**

The Department of Ophthalmology of the Mengo Clinic in Kampala is regarded as one of the best in the country. Around four million people live in the area it serves. Today, the Mengo Ophthalmic Clinic offers its patients comprehensive eye care services, often including cataract and glaucoma surgery. The objective is to prevent blindness and provide cures wherever possible, a reason why a new building is urgently required in order to provide the needed help for the huge number of patients needing it.