

2018 MISSION SALAMALEIKUM SENEGAL!



MISSION ACCOMPLISHED SMILES AND GLIMMERS OF HOPE IN ST-LOUIS

By Julie Roegiers and Catherine Rioux, General Management

On November 18th, the IRIS Mundial team left the comforts of home to travel to the region of St. Louis, Senegal, in order to provide complete eye care to the community. The volunteers returned to Quebec on December 1st with pride and emotion: 2000 patients among the most disadvantaged received care thanks to their dedication and unwavering determination.

January 2017 and May 2018 exploratory missions helped to establish a good partnership with the Association St-Louisienne pour la Vue (ASV) and to highlight the great visual needs in the region that is called Ndar in Wolof. Indeed, more than 973,219 people live in this sub-Saharan desert region of 19,000 km2 and only have access to two ophthalmologists. Considering that the population earns an average of \$ 2.50 CAD per day according to the ASV, it becomes financially impossible for them to have access to public and private care, while a visual examination costs up to \$ 43 CAD and a prescription eyeglasses price varies between \$ 150 and \$ 450 CAD.

“In my entire career, I have never seen so many optic nerves so severely affected in glaucoma patients. I saw 10 of them in only the first day of consultation when normally this is a rare disease.”

- Dr. Line Sauvageau, Optometrist



PASSION IN SERVING THE DISADVANTAGED: AN ALMOST INSURMOUNTABLE CHALLENGE REACHED

It is a big-hearted team of volunteers that travelled to meet the Senegalese culture on the African continent in order to offer their time and expertise. St. Louis, the city where the clinic was organized, is located by the sea and is historically considered as a fishermen's town. Classified a World Heritage by UNESCO, it was the capital of Senegal until 1902 and has the appearance of a small seaside European City full of contrasts between beauty and poverty. Wherever we walk, we can see proud people smiling with beautiful and multicoloured clothes, regardless of their social condition.

This project is considered one of the most intense and challenging missions carried out by IRIS Mundial because of the seriousness of the cases. In this case, the team did a phenomenal job with the support of local volunteers! IRIS Mundial is very proud of its 30 multidisciplinary volunteer team consisting of ophthalmologists, optometrists, opticians, nurses and other stakeholders who supported each other and kept the motivation to examine all registered patients without any exception: worked until after midnight one evening and a sixth day to finish the exams... nothing could stop them! At the end, several hundred people had a treatment and regained sight: among the 2000 patients examined, 522 of them benefited from an in-depth vision examination, 111 from a medical examination, 1541 received prescription glasses and 29 had access to an eye surgery. In addition, 100% of patients received sun protection and are now aware of the harmful effects of sunlight on the eye through the projection of a short IRIS Mundial video created especially for the occasion.

“I was moved to be able to give new glasses to Abdoulaye, an 11 year old boy we found in the street, who had old, broken and patched glasses that were not adapted to his vision. He had -14 dioptries. I felt so overwhelmed with emotion when he smiled after noticing the difference with his new clear vision!”

- Christian Gagner, Optometrist

GIVING SIGHT TO IMPROVE LIVING CONDITIONS

Beyond the prescriptions each patient came with a story of hardship, that's what motivated the volunteers to surpass themselves and make sure they offer care with a smile and consideration to everyone without leaving someone behind. Mr. Ousmane Dia, one of the patients, wrote us after the mission: “You have been so professional and kind with us the beneficiaries. Thank you 1000 times. “

For example, Coumba, a brilliant 14-year-old girl from a family of five, was severely handicapped at school because of a mature

cataract in her left eye. Consequently, her school director referred her to the clinic. She had an eye surgery and can now hope for a better future!

The IRIS Mundial team also completely changed the life of Tening, an 8-year-old girl who had congenital cataracts in both eyes, preventing almost any light from entering. Her teacher accompanied her from Dakar, nearly 5 hours' drive, to the clinic and have surgery. What a joy when she saw for the first time after the operation! Then, she received her first pair of glasses and will be able to go to school just like any other child of her age.



ON AN OFFICIAL PATH FOR A PERMANENT PROGRAM

This one-time project is the inauguration of a collaboration between the Association St-Louisienne pour la Vue (ASV) and IRIS Mundial: the official establishment of the Program of Prevention and Fight against Blindness (PPFB) will begin in January 2019 thanks to a grant from the Québec International Development Program (QIDP). This initial phase is expected to last 2 years. Optometry material will be sent from Canada to Senegal, local staff will be hired and trained to provide vision screening in remote areas, etc. If necessary, patients will be referred for further eye examinations at the Sanar Community Center, whose construction should be completed next May. The data collected during this mission will help to better guide the offer of eye care to the population and raise awareness about the importance of vision health and hygiene.

THANKS TO ALL OUR PARTNERS!

Thank you to our official partners without whom this mission could not have been successful:

Ministère de la Santé et de l'Action sociale in Senegal
Association St-Louisienne pour la Vue (ASV) and its volunteers
St. Louis Regional Hospital Center
Keur Mame Fatim Konté Center

Thank you to all the organizations that supported IRIS Mundial in this large-scale project with donations in money, equipment and/or services: IRIS, The Visual Group and the IRIS stores for **the preparation of used eyeglasses, Novartis, Alcon Canada, Johnson & Johnson, Allergan, MEXUSCAN Cargo, True Blue Vision, Centennial, Laservue Clinic, Kleargo, Collaboration Santé Internationale, Book Humanitaire, Délégation générale du Québec à Dakar and Newlook Vision Group.**

A huge thank you and congratulations to the leaders and to all the volunteers of the mission for their tremendous achievement accomplished through their generosity and dedication:

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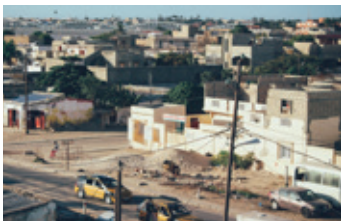
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Since 2001, IRIS Mundial carried out 19 training missions, 24 one-time projects and the establishment of two permanent programs in Haiti. IRIS Mundial projects have helped more than 89,000 people over the years. We help thousands of people to better see the world!

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