

# A chance to thrive



sense  
international



Impact report 2020/21

## Where we work



Sense International is a leading global charity supporting people with deafblindness in eight countries worldwide.

Our work focuses on ensuring that people with deafblindness are able to access education, healthcare and work, so that they can thrive and live life to their full potential.

81,167

children were screened last year for sight and hearing impairments around the world.

### Our priority areas:



#### 1 Early intervention

We work with Ministries of Health so that children with hearing and visual impairments are identified as early as possible and go on to get specialist therapy and support to develop to their full potential.



#### 2 Inclusive education

Every child has a right to learn so we work with teachers, parents, and governments to develop specialist educational support for children with deafblindness at their local school or at home.



#### 3 Vocational training

Vocational training means young people with deafblindness can earn and participate in their communities, for example by running a small business.



#### 4 Advocacy and research

We support people with deafblindness to advocate for their rights and we advocate at all levels for their inclusion. We also undertake research to provide evidence of what needs to change and of what works.



# Innovating and adapting to the challenges of COVID-19

Despite the constraints imposed by COVID-19 in 2020/21, we have continued to deliver life-changing work using innovative solutions to meet the needs of people with deafblindness.

Our teams have successfully adapted their ways of working. Their versatility, agility and innovation in delivering new activities to respond to the global pandemic can be demonstrated by the successful implementation of our emergency response in Kenya. This project provided hygiene

facilities in over 20 schools impacting thousands of pupils and teachers and helping them to combat the virus, as well as food and medicine to support 200 people with deafblindness and their families. We also provided mental health support to hundreds of families, and accessible information about the virus and how to keep safe.

This impressive work, alongside our global adaptation of traditional face-to-face training programmes to virtual / online models of learning has ensured the continuity of our support for learners, parents and carers at a time of social isolation and distancing due the global pandemic.



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



*Sunil Sheth*  
**Sunil Sheth**  
Chair of Sense International



## Raju's story

Raju has realised his dream of opening a successful lunch outlet, or 'Tiffin Shop', after receiving business training and start-up funds from Sense International.

Sense International India first met Raju when he was 22. Born with low vision and hearing loss, he had spent a lot of time as a young boy helping his father sell lunches and snack foods in his Tiffin Shop. His father had taught him a lot, including a strong work ethic and the determination to never give up.

Raju joined Sense International India's vocational training programme to learn how to establish a livelihood. He wanted to run his own Tiffin Shop, and so received training in business management and the skills required to ensure that his venture would be profitable. When he was ready, Raju received the start-up funds that he needed to set up his shop.



Raju has worked hard to overcome challenges and manage the shop as independently as possible. He goes to the local market by himself to buy ingredients. He also prepares the food, including local favourites such as puri, mysore bajji and chutney. In order to ensure that his business is competitive and profitable, he entices customers to visit the shop with the aroma of spices wafting from the kitchen. Since opening the shop, Raju has further developed his communication and social skills through regular interactions with customers.

With some assistance from his mother, he has gained the trust of his customers and the support of his local community. Raju hopes to further expand his business in the future, enabling him to live an independent life.

1,121

young people with deafblindness gained vocational skills last year.



## Early intervention

From the moment a child is born they need to communicate. That's why early intervention work is vital.

Children with deafblindness can be identified through a process of hearing screening and sight testing. In many countries, health services lack the capacity, equipment and training for this.

We have established hearing screening and sight testing services in partnership with local health services and government ministries.

We train health workers to identify children with deafblindness and other complex disabilities, and to provide specialist therapies. This includes multi-sensory stimulation, where children make use of all their senses to explore, discover and learn through the use of adapted toys and equipment.

Our work extends to supporting parents and caregivers to gain the skills to nurture their child's development in the home.

We share what we learn with health professionals and government ministries, so that more children benefit from improved services in the long term.



### Key achievements



#### India

2,000 children were screened for sensory impairments. More than 600 children received early intervention services.



#### Kenya

Last October, a new sensory screening and early intervention project began in Garissa and Kwale Counties.

- We funded four early intervention units.
- We will source and train 169 health workers on disability and sensory screening.
- We will screen 55,000 children for sensory impairments.
- We will support 124 children and families through early intervention therapy.



#### Uganda

7,000 children were screened for sensory impairments. Fifty children who were identified with deafblindness and other complex disabilities are now supported with early intervention therapy and assistive devices.

“I thought it was impossible to teach my child, but after seeing other children, I realised my child could have received such support from childhood and his life could have been much better than now.”

Prabesh's mother



## Prabesh's story

Like many parents of children with deafblindness, Prabesh's mother and father were reluctant to allow their son to engage with the local community due to the stigma associated with disability in Nepal. So, when Sumitra, a deafblind special educator trained by Sense International's partner, the National Federation of the Deaf Nepal, heard about a child with sensory impairments in the area, she had to work hard to convince Prabesh's parents to allow her to visit him.

But their initial reluctance soon faded when Sumitra was able to demonstrate the benefits of providing direct support to children with deafblindness in the home.

By showing Prabesh's parents the progress made by other children that she was supporting, Sumitra was able to gain their consent to start working with their son.

When Sumitra first met Prabesh, he had never left the confines of his room. As he had been carried everywhere, he had not built up mobility skills to move around independently. Through regular sessions, Sumitra helped Prabesh to gain the confidence to touch the floor and start to crawl. She

encouraged him to explore beyond his room, and familiarise himself with his home. She also supported Prabesh to learn basic self-care skills such as how to dress himself, use the toilet and eat and drink independently.

Prabesh enjoys Sumitra's visits and his family actively support the work that she is doing. His parents now feel able to be more open about his disability and are looking for further ways to improve his quality of life.



Thousands of children have been screened for vision and hearing impairments.

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## Inclusive education

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 work with families, schools, colleges and governments. Together we support children with deafblindness so they can learn in the place that best suits them.

Our first-ever multi-country inclusive education project has facilitated learning for children like Morium. We've provided schools with equipment, trained parents and teachers through online courses, adapted curricula and learning materials and tackled stigma.

We develop community support for children to learn at home, and train Learning Support Assistants to work alongside children in their local mainstream school.

We train parents and teachers, as well as Parent-Teacher Associations, and provide appropriate technology, adapted school facilities, specialist curricula and learning materials.



## Morium's story

Morium became one of the first children with deafblindness in Bangladesh to pass her primary school exams after she received help to stay in education from Sense International.

When Sense International first met Morium, her deteriorating eyesight and hearing loss meant that she was on the verge of being taken out of school. Aged nine, her future looked similar to that of tens of thousands of children with disabilities across Bangladesh – a lifetime of social isolation and a lack of opportunity to thrive.

As she struggled at school, Morium was identified as having deafblindness. She was referred to Sense International's



“My special educator spent time with my parents and teachers to help them understand how I can be supported to stay at school. Without this, I expect I would have had to stay at home and not have the opportunity to learn and develop, to communicate and be part of my community. I now wish to one day become a teacher.” Morium

national partner in Bangladesh, the Centre for Disability in Development (CDD). After speaking to Morium and her family and carrying out a more detailed assessment, CDD ensured that she received assistance from a special educator trained in providing tailored support to people with deafblindness.

Morium's local primary school was unwilling for her to continue studying. To ensure that she stayed in education, the special educator worked closely with the school management and teachers to help them understand deafblindness and adapt their approach to better suit Morium's learning needs. In consultation with Morium and her family, the special educator developed an Individual Education Plan. This identified areas in her formal education where she needed some additional help, as well as everyday skills that needed strengthening. Morium also received

hearing aids and glasses to help maximise the use of her remaining sight and hearing.

Over time, the school became more supportive, and with hard work and determination, Morium began to achieve her learning goals.

Supported and encouraged by her special educator, she prepared for and successfully passed her Primary School Certificate. This enabled her to progress on to High School, becoming one of the first children with deafblindness in Bangladesh to do so.



## Key achievements



### Kenya

A curriculum, guidelines and training manual have been developed for Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) and 99 LSAs were trained through the Kenya Institute of Special Education, enabling 99 children with deafblindness and other complex disabilities to be identified and enrolled in mainstream education.



### Nepal

66 children and young adults with deafblindness are being supported to attend school.



### Romania

The E-Sense educational software platform was launched to support teachers and parents of learners with sensory impairments and testing has begun with partner schools.

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## Vocational training

Meaningful work gives young people with deafblindness an income, confidence, and a role in society.

Each young person we help has a ripple effect, showing their community how capable they are.

We work with governments, training colleges and partners to set up high-quality vocational training. We help young people to join training centres, to become apprentices, to make business plans, to start their own small enterprises, and link them with advisers and local business-support schemes.



## Key achievements



### Bangladesh

Working in partnership with Jhikargacha Development Organization (JDO), we provided training to caregivers and people with deafblindness on poultry and cattle rearing for income generation.



### Tanzania

We trained 36 young people with deafblindness and other complex disabilities on business development, book-keeping and safeguarding. They were also supported with small grants to set up their own businesses.



### Peru

We supported 45 young people with deafblindness and their families in Arequipa, Cusco and Lima to develop business plans and launch their enterprises with some seed funding provided, alongside advocacy to the Ministry of Labour to support development of a vocational training model.



## Hadija's story

Following support from Sense International, Hadija's independence has challenged stigma associated with disability in her local community.

Hadija has deafblindness and cannot talk. It was difficult for her mother, Fasila, to come to terms with her daughter's diagnosis. "When I first discovered her disability, I was so devastated," explains Fasila, "it was as if she had died."

When Sense International Uganda first met Hadija, they arranged for her to undergo hearing and sight testing at the hospital. They also helped her to access an education. She was enrolled at a specialist unit for students with deafblindness at the local high school so that she could receive tailored learning support.

Sense International Uganda worked with Fasila too, providing therapy sessions to help her to accept her daughter's disability. She also received training in sign language to enable her to communicate better with Hadija.



**"We realise she is intelligent in other ways."**

Musilima, the Village Chairperson

When the time came for Hadija to leave school, Sense International supported her to transition to a working life by providing a knitting machine. She uses this to make sweaters and produce other goods that she is able to sell. As well as allowing her to contribute to the household income, it has given Hadija a sense of independence.

Hadija's success has had an impact on how people see her in the community, helping to challenge stigma and negative perceptions of people with disabilities. "At first other villagers used to call her names, but when they understood the situation, they stopped," says Musilima, the Village Chairperson. "She is disciplined and hardworking, and we realise she is intelligent in other ways".



**Our work has supported young people like Hadija to gain vocational skills, set up small businesses and contribute to their communities.**



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## Advocacy and research

Disability activists say:  
“Nothing about us without us.”

The voices of people with deafblindness must be heard by decision-makers and wider society to challenge the barriers that prevent them from living life to their full potential.

We support people with deafblindness to advocate for their rights.

We work alongside individuals with deafblindness and their families to share information about their rights

as well as the social protections and services that are available to them.

No matter whether we are focusing on early intervention, education or vocational training, advocacy is vital because it ensures that our work informs wider, systemic change.

Over the years, we have built relationships with key government ministries, raising awareness about deafblindness among officials through training events and opportunities to meet with project participants.

### Key achievements



#### Nepal

We contributed to research on experiences of disabled people during the pandemic by the Institute of Development Studies.



#### Romania

Our online conference ‘Deafblindness during the pandemic’ had over 200 participants, who shared the experiences of people with deafblindness, their families, teachers and support workers during COVID-19.



#### Tanzania

We assessed 10 resource hubs that support learners with deafblindness and complex disabilities. This resulted in the Ministry of Education asking Sense International to help create a curriculum for children with deafblindness to support their learning in schools.

### I too have a voice



Children and young people from Romania recently took part in a national campaign launched by Sense International. It aimed to increase awareness about the rights of people with disabilities. The campaign, called ‘I too have a voice,’ was inspired by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). Children and young people created video responses to advocate for the convention, using their own experiences and voice. Here’s an extract from Constantin’s:

**On our big planet,  
I have rights like everyone else.  
To a nation and a name,  
I am unique in this world.  
Learning is my right  
And no matter how hard it is  
I do it my way  
And I always succeed.  
I also have the right to a house  
And to a beautiful family  
In which to be loved,  
Cared and protected.**

Written by Constantin Marian  
Coordinating teacher: Cristina Țiganea,  
Special Gymnasium School for the  
Visually Impaired, Bucharest

## Advocacy and research

Our research shows what needs to change and what works. Evidence of the impact of our work is vital to persuade decision-makers to change policies and systems.

### Key achievements



#### India

We have leveraged our special consultative status at the United Nations to get visibility for people with deafblindness at high-level forums and events. Our written and oral statements were published and presented during these events.



#### Uganda

Our engagement campaigns won inclusion of specific provisions on deafblindness in the draft National Disability Policy.



#### Peru

Through the network ‘Working Table on Disability and Rights’ we campaigned against a newly proposed disability rights Bill. Instead, we advocated to progress and properly implement existing legislation.

We lobbied the Peruvian Government at the start of the pandemic for proper inclusion of people with disabilities in emergency response protocols which had initially failed to reach our community of people with deafblindness and multiple disabilities.

# Fundraising



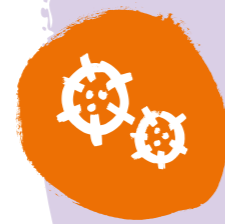
## A few highlights



We launched our Ambassador Circle, a giving club through which we are recruiting dedicated individuals who share our passion to support people with deafblindness.



We held two virtual events – Stay Connected and our Virtual Field Trip to Kenya. Both highlighted our work during the pandemic when we couldn't meet face to face. Thank you to all those who attended.



We launched our Emergency COVID-19 Appeal raising over £100,000 to ensure we could continue to support people with deafblindness during the pandemic.



# Building for the future



- We are proud to be a partner in the Disability Inclusive Development 'Inclusive Futures' consortium (led by Sightsavers and supported by UK Aid) with programmes in Bangladesh, Kenya, Nepal and Tanzania.
- Sense International Uganda started an early childhood development programme in July 2020, thanks to a grant of £456,682 from Comic Relief and UK Aid.



- Our sensory screening and early intervention programme in Kenya started in October 2020 supported by a UK Aid Match (FCDO) grant of £383,794 and grants from several trusts and foundations including the Medicor Foundation Liechtenstein, the Else Kröner-Fresenius-Stiftung and the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF).
- In April 2020, we started a three-year global Inclusive Education project with the support of the Nelumbo Foundation and as part of this project we are also developing a global learning platform for people with deafblindness, their families, carers and educators.



## A word from a partner

Support from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) over the past three years has been vital. Last year, it enabled the UK Aid Match Bangladesh 'My Turn to Learn' project to support 514 children and young people with deafblindness through education. It also provided training for 906 parents and carers to support children and young people to learn. Before the project, there was a widespread lack of understanding of deafblindness in Bangladesh. This led to stigma and meant that the basic rights of people with deafblindness were ignored and their needs went unmet.

"Before the project we neglected our child and believed that the child would not be able to do anything in life. However, we have learned that like other children, our children with deafblindness have [the] same rights and entitlements." Focus Group Participants

### Our Rapid Response Programme

'COVID-19 rapid response for people with deafblindness, their families and schools in Kenya' installed accessible facilities in 25 mainstream schools. This has provided 1,634 children with disabilities and 25,784 of their peers with access to safe hand washing.

"It is wonderful to see the impact of Sense International's work in Kenya and the incredible difference it is making to people's lives as they cope with the pandemic." Penny Innes (Head of Disability Inclusion Team, FCDO)

FCDO's ongoing support means that we can ensure that people with deafblindness can thrive and live life to their full potential.



## Looking ahead

Meeting the challenges presented by COVID-19 has required agility and innovation to ensure the ongoing delivery of quality services for people with deafblindness. As we work on our plans for the future, we will continue to adapt our programmes to mitigate some of the challenges we have encountered over the last year, using lessons we have learned from our innovative approach to inclusion during the pandemic. We will continue to adapt and improve our programming as we begin work on refreshing our current strategy.



## Major supporters

The Trustees are indebted to all our donors for their ongoing support.

### Major grants from statutory authorities and substantial donations were received from the following supporters:

Comic Relief (directly to Sense International Uganda)

Dorfred Charitable Trust

Enabel, the Belgian Development Agency (funded by the European Union) (directly to Sense International Kenya)

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Green Hall Foundation

Guernsey Overseas Aid and Development Commission

Hollyhock Charitable Foundation

James Tudor Foundation

Kilimanjaro Blind Trust Africa

Latin American Children's Trust

Love is Kindness Charitable Trust

Medicor Foundation

Mrs J B Wood's Charitable Trust

Nelumbo Stiftung

Old Mutual Trust Fund

Rhododendron Trust

Rupin and Madhavi Vadera

Souter Charitable Trust

Stavros Niarchos Foundation

The Allan and Nesta Ferguson Charitable Trust

The Band Aid Charitable Trust

The Beatrice Laing Trust

The Batchworth Trust

The Blackwood Engineering Trust

The British and Foreign School Society

The Carmen Butler-Charteris Trust

The Cumber Family Charitable Trust

The Else Kröner-Fresenius-Stiftung

The Grace Trust

The Jersey Overseas Aid Commission

The National Lottery Community Fund

The Open Society Initiative for East Africa

(directly to Sense International Kenya)

The Tony and Audrey Watson Charitable Trust

Uganda Society for Disabled

Children (funded by UN Women's

Peace and Humanitarian Fund)

Ulverscroft Foundation

With special thanks to the Founding Members

of Sense International's Ambassador Circle.

# 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 2020/21, overall income fell to £2.3 million from £2.5 million. This is to be expected, after an unprecedented year. Shops were shut temporarily, and fundraising events cancelled due to COVID-19. Some funders re-focused their support domestically and suspended or restricted grant making. The proportion of expenditure used for generating further income was 11p in every pound. Expenditure increased from £2.3 million to £2.5 million, as we rose to the challenge of supporting families in need through the pandemic.

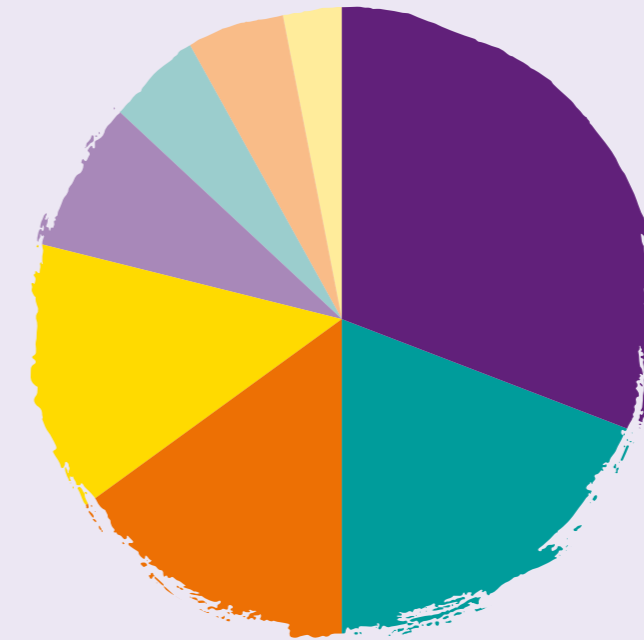
## Income was received from the following sources in 2020/21:

- Grants received in the UK 36%
- Other UK funding 32%
- Grants and other income received in the countries where we work 17%
- Donation by Sense 15%



## Sense International 2020/21 expenditure by country:

- Kenya 31%
- Tanzania 19%
- Uganda 15%
- Bangladesh 14%
- Peru 8%
- Nepal 5%
- Romania 5%
- India\* 3%



\*Sense International India is an independent charity that raises its own funds, and 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.





## Humayra's story

Since 2018, Sense International has supported 514 children and young people with deafblindness in Bangladesh, including Humayra.

Nine-year-old Humayra has deafblindness and epilepsy and lives with her mother and grandparents. Humayra was supported with therapy and pre-primary education at home by her Sense International special educator before she joined a mainstream school. It took a lot of persuasion to convince the teachers and the School Management Committee that Humayra could be included in school life.

Training was provided to her teachers and her special educator supported her in the classroom. At first, Humayra was shy, but she soon started to love singing with her special educator, and practising her counting.





Humayra's school closed during the pandemic, and her family has experienced uncertainty and financial difficulties. Sense International has provided the family with emergency funding for food and medicine. Humayra's special educator has been supporting her with daily activities and education, and she's excited to go back to her school when it reopens.

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