

**AT2030**  
Case Study

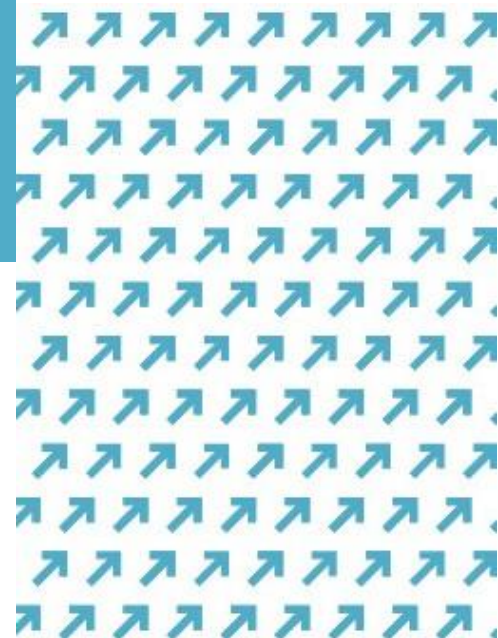
# Access to life-changing spectacles for millions: A new vision for KwaZulu Natal, South Africa

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**Cluster 3 Country  
Implementation**  
Country Capacity

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## About AT2030

The AT2030 programme tests ‘what works’ to improve access to Assistive Technology (AT) and will invest £20m over five years to support solutions with a focus on innovative products, new service models, and global capacity support. The programme will reach nine million directly and six million more people indirectly to enable a lifetime of potential through life-changing AT. The programme is funded by UK Aid and led by the Global Disability Innovation Hub.

Under Cluster 3: Country Implementation of the AT2030 programme, CHAI is partnering with country governments to identify opportunities to drive availability and affordability of AT. The below presents a case study of one such piece of work.

## Context

### The need and provision of spectacles in KwaZulu Natal Province

KwaZulu Natal (KZN) is South Africa’s second largest province with a population of 11.5 million. It is estimated that about 3.1 million people in the province need any kind of corrective devices for vision.<sup>1</sup> Over half of the people are uninsured, relying on the public health sector for services. That includes eye care services as well as provision of spectacles for those who need them.

In South Africa, the Provincial Departments of Health are responsible for providing both eye care services and spectacles to residents on a sliding scale. Depending on their financial situation, those accessing public health sector services may be responsible for paying for these services in full or may be partially or fully subsidized.

However, while KZN Province does provide eye care services, it has not been able to provide spectacles when they are prescribed because of budgetary constraints and poor supply chains.

Brian Holden Vision Institute (BHVI), an Australian non-profit non-governmental organization, stepped in more than five years ago and partnered with KZN Province to improve the supply chain. BHVI set up an optical lab to manufacture and supply spectacles at a subsidized cost. However, the model is unsustainable for BHVI, as it relies on continued donor funding.

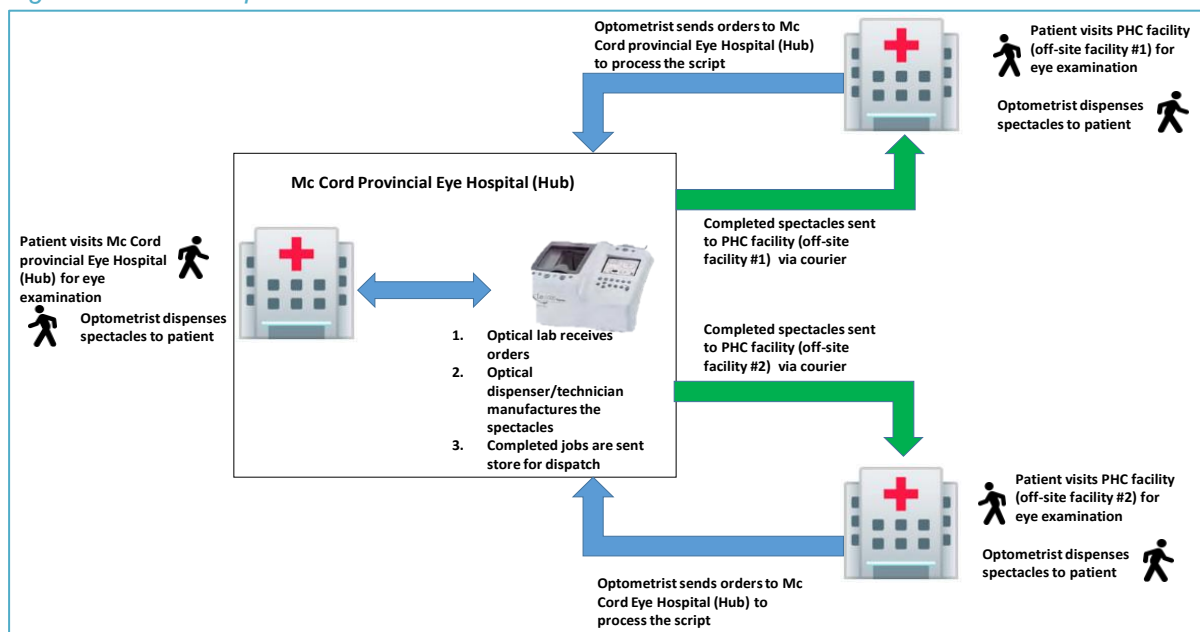
<sup>1</sup> Mashige KP, Jaggernath J, Ramson P, Martin C, Chinanayi FS, Naidoo KS. Prevalence of Refractive Errors in the INK Area, Durban, South Africa. *Optom Vis Sci.* 2016 Mar;93(3):243-50. doi: 10.1097/OPX.0000000000000771. PMID: 26760577.

## Making provision of spectacles affordable and sustainable

Integrating an optical lab that manufactures spectacles into the public health system will reduce costs and ensure a sustainable provision of spectacles. Therefore, a long-term solution was envisioned that integrates the spectacle supply with the clinical service into one seamless operation. Such a ‘hub and spoke’ model would establish the optical lab at a provincial eye care hospital. This set-up would streamline the entire process from eye examination and prescription at surrounding districts (‘the spokes’) to producing the spectacles at a central location (‘the hub’). See Figure 1.

McCord Provincial Eye Care Hospital was earmarked by KZN Province to act as the hub site. The new model is expected to reduce manufacturing costs by 50 percent and speed up turnaround times for prescription glasses, in some cases providing same-day delivery.

Figure 1. Hub and Spoke Model



## The Challenge

### **Provincial Treasury had not allocated budget to run the optical lab and help operationalize the 'hub & spoke' model**

Operationalizing this new model would require the provincial Treasury to allocate budget. However, for years, eye care budgets were managed at the district level, resulting in a fragmented service model that lacked cooperation and collaboration - essential for creating efficient and quality services - across the province.

## Approach

CHAI supported the KZN Provincial Department of Health to conduct a costing to motivate funding. By using actual data from the National Department of Health, BHVI optical lab, and Phelophepa eye care clinic, CHAI helped the Province determine how much it would cost to provide spectacles for its uninsured residents. That analysis helped the Treasury to mobilize the funding needed to get this model off the ground.

## Impact: what works

### **Province budgets US\$1.5 million for eyeglasses**

In 2019, the KZN Treasury allocated ZAR 22 million (~US\$1.5 million) for FY2020 (April 2019-March 2020) to provide spectacle coverage for uninsured residents across the province and to start building the optical lab at the McCord Provincial Eye Hospital.

An initial ZAR 8 million was spent in FY2020. As a result, over 27,000 people have already received the spectacles they need to improve not only their vision, but their quality of life. Underspent funds were rolled over into FY2021 to support additional procurement of spectacles.

## Next Steps

The new optical lab at McCord Provincial Eye Hospital is currently under construction and expected to open in the first quarter of 2021. The Province is currently finalising the equipment specifications for the optical lab and beginning procurement. While KZN Province waits for the in-house lab to be fully functional, spectacles are procured via short-term contracts with private optical labs.