

OneDollarGlasses

Making a difference across the globe

950 million people around the world need glasses, but many cannot afford them. In a world where access to basic eye care remains a luxury for millions, OneDollarGlasses e.V. provides affordable and sustainable solutions to correctable vision impairments. Founded in 2012 in Germany, OneDollarGlasses (EinDolarBrille) has evolved into a global force, transforming lives, and creating opportunities in Asia, Africa, and South America.



Global need

The core mission of the company is to offer basic ophthalmic care to people worldwide. The organisation goes beyond traditional eye care models, incorporating eye tests, provision of affordable glasses, training local staff, awareness campaigns, and international networking into its comprehensive approach. Once trained, people can make a living from the production and sale of glasses.

The OneDollarGlasses system

Central to OneDollarGlasses' impact is its innovative system based on the principle of 'helping people to help themselves'. The product consists of a lightweight yet sturdy spring steel frame and pre-ground lenses made of unbreakable plastic. The cost of materials for a pair of glasses amounts to approximately 79p, making them exceptionally affordable. These glasses include a wide range of spherical lenses covering different sight requirements, with additional options for rectangular lenses and prescription sunglass lenses. The bending machine, a crucial component of the system, operates without electricity, enabling production in regions where access to power may be limited.

Training for ophthalmic specialists

According to a World Health Organisation (WHO) study, there is a shortage of more than 65,000 ophthalmic specialists worldwide. Recognising the shortage, OneDollarGlasses has developed a one-year programme training 'GoodVision' technicians who first learn the basics of ophthalmic optics and then complete a 12-week internship before further in-depth theoretical training. The trainees are instructed by already trained technicians and an optometrist. This equips them to conduct free eye tests and professionally fit glasses, addressing the shortage of skilled workers in developing countries.

Education about the importance of good eye care also forms an essential part of the programme through local health institutions and NGOs, and they plan to extend the programme to include simple operations to remove cataracts, which are a major cause of sight loss.



Building a supply structure

To ensure widespread access, OneDollarGlasses is establishing various sales channels in collaboration with local partners. This includes eyewear shops and innovative eye camps conducted in villages, where individuals receive on-site testing and immediate access to suitable glasses. Notably, the organisation integrates individuals with physical disabilities into the training of eyewear manufacturers and ophthalmic specialists. They have received significant recognition for their efforts, including awards such as the Siemens Stiftung Award, The Tech Award (USA), the German Sustainability Award and the Next Economy Award.

Over the past ten years this approach has made a substantial impact, supplying approximately 500,000 people with one-dollar glasses, creating around 360 jobs in participating countries, and conducting over 1.2 million eye tests globally.

Visionary behind the initiative

The driving force behind OneDollarGlasses is its founder, Martin Aufmuth. His journey began with a personal experience of needing glasses from childhood. Inspired by a passage in 'Out of Poverty' by Paul Polak, Martin envisioned affordable glasses for those living on one dollar a day or less and the idea evolved into a tangible solution with the creation of the organisation. His inventive spirit led him to experiment with materials until the first prototypes of the spring steel spectacles and the bending device were ready which he took on his travels to various African countries. This marked the beginning of a global initiative to empower individuals through improved vision.

Looking ahead

As OneDollarGlasses continues to make a lasting impact, the organisation remains committed to its sustainable business model. The establishment of permanent production and distribution structures in participating countries is funded by donations, while the proceeds from glasses sales contribute to covering on-site costs.

OneDollarGlasses e.V. exemplifies the transformative power of combining innovation, compassion, and

community engagement to address a fundamental aspect of human well-being: clear vision. With a growing network of volunteers, sister organisations, and global recognition, the journey towards a world where basic eye care is accessible to all continues.

For those who believe in the idea, the vision is clear: changing lives, one pair of glasses at a time. For more information please visit OneDollarGlasses official website. ✕

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