

Essilor partners with the Royal Government of Bhutan in its ambition to become the first country in the world to eradicate poor vision

(Charenton-le-Pont, France, 7 December 2018) – Essilor commits to further expanding its unique inclusive business and philanthropic programmes to eradicate unprotected and uncorrected poor vision in the Kingdom of Bhutan, where 25% of the population suffer from uncorrected refractive errors and much of the population is at risk of exposure to UVA/UVB rays due to high altitude.

The Group has today signed Letters of Intent with the Royal Government of Bhutan and the Central Monastic Body to sustainably strengthen the country's vision care infrastructure. In line with their common ambition to eradicate unprotected and uncorrected poor vision, the partners will address the two biggest barriers to good vision, access and awareness, through training and capacity building, philanthropic support and awareness-raising.

Chairman of Essilor, Hubert Sagnieres, commented: *"Poor vision affects every aspect of a person's life, impacting their ability to learn, to work, to live independently and to realize their full potential. We are proud to be collaborating with the Bhutanese government to develop a strategy and actions which will see poor vision eradicated from the country. This will bring further prosperity and happiness to its people and Essilor one important step closer to its ambition of eradicating poor vision worldwide within one generation."*

Speaking about the partnership, Bhutan's Minister of Health, Lyonpo Dechen Wangmo, said: *"I am extremely happy to share, under the patronage of Her Majesty the Royal Grandmother Ashi Kesang Choden Wangchuck, that the Ministry of Health is honoured to be a partner in Essilor's vision to eradicate poor vision. I am confident that this partnership is the start of a compassionate friendship with a common goal to render help to the most in need."*

To address the lack of skilled eye care professionals and access to eyewear, Essilor will bring its most successful inclusive-business, Eye Mitra™ ("Friend of the eye" in Hindi), from India to Bhutan. By training women and men to become primary vision care providers and micro-entrepreneurs, Essilor will support qualified students to open up their own optical stores in their communities. This will not only help to sustainably improve access to affordable quality eyecare across the Kingdom of Bhutan, but also to bring socio-economic value to rural communities.

Additionally, based on its globally successful training initiatives and tools to bolster local capacities, Essilor will train existing government health assistants, village health workers and monks from the Central Monastic Body, to do basic visual acuity tests, distribute simple reading glasses and direct patients with refractive errors to eye health practitioners, including the newly-trained micro-entrepreneurs if necessary.

To meet the immediate need for correction and protection, Essilor will also donate 400,000 pairs of corrective eyewear and sunglasses, to be dispensed via existing healthcare programmes over the course of this partnership. This donation will be sufficient to provide first-time eyewear to all Bhutanese citizens suffering from uncorrected refractive errors, estimated to be around 25%

of the population, and those living at very high altitudes exposed to high levels of UVA/UVB and in need of protection.

In parallel, Essilor will support the Bhutanese Ministry of Health in its “National Eye Health Strategic Plan” (2018-2024) by contributing to the development of national guidelines and a legal regulation framework for optical services and practice. And to further address consumer attitudes and the lack of awareness around poor vision, Essilor together with the Ministry of Health will work on developing a nation-wide awareness-raising campaign to sensitise the general public to the need for vision correction and protection and the life changing benefits it can have.

About Essilor

Essilor International is the world's leading ophthalmic optics company. Essilor designs, manufactures and markets a wide range of lenses to improve and protect eyesight. Its mission is to improve lives by improving sight. To support this mission, Essilor allocates more than €200 million to research and innovation every year, in a commitment to continuously bring new, more effective products to market. Its flagship brands are Varilux®, Crizal®, Transitions®, Eyezen™, Xperio®, Foster Grant®, Bolon™ and Costa®. It also develops and markets equipment, instruments and services for eyecare professionals.

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