



In The Field

"It's amazing he was even walking around"

That was the reaction of Fotis Velissarakos, the volunteer doctor in charge of the Opening Eyes venue in Athens to Hicham Novara, a swimmer from Morocco competing at World Games.

Hicham came to Healthy Athletes with extremely bad vision but wearing no glasses. Before the exam, he sat alone and only spoke when asked a question. But by the time he finished his eye exam and was wearing corrective lenses, he was smiling, talking to his coach, and proudly showing the volunteers pictures of his friends on his phone.

Hicham's vision was one of the worst among the more than 1000 athletes seen at Opening Eyes during World Games 2011. **"That is probably why he is a swimmer,"** Fotis said. **"You don't really need full vision to swim."**

His uncorrected vision was an astonishing -22 in one eye and -13 in the other — essentially blind. But thanks to Opening Eyes, the whole world today is a much brighter, more accessible place for Hicham.



Thanks to the Opening Eyes global partners:



Opening Eyes is changing lives in communities across the globe, providing free eye assessments, prescription eyewear, sunglasses and sports goggles to people with intellectual disabilities.

IMPORTANCE AND IMPACT:

Opening Eyes screenings have found that a large percentage of Special Olympics athletes have untreated eye conditions.

31% need new prescription glasses
20% have never had an eye exam
16% have an eye disease

200,000 assessments performed in 80 participating countries globally.

100,000+ sunglasses, 90,000+ prescription eyewear, 20,000+ sports goggles distributed globally to Special Olympics athletes.

GOALS:

- 1.** Increase access to eye care for Special Olympics athletes, as well as all people with intellectual disabilities.
- 2.** Raise eye care professionals' awareness of vision and eye health concerns of people with special needs, including difficulties involved in accessing treatment.
- 3.** Provide a list of regional eye care providers who care for people with special needs to all athletes who participate in the program.
- 4.** Develop a body of knowledge about vision and eye health of children and adults with special needs.

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