



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Half a million factory workers in low-income countries have vision screened in landmark project led by alliance of US Businesses – a milestone announced today, World Sight Day**

- Levi Strauss Foundation, VF Corporation, Warby Parker and Deckers Brands work with social enterprise VisionSpring and USAID.
- 188,000 apparel and footwear factory workers have vision corrected with eyeglasses.
- Clear Vision Workplace alliance sets target to screen additional 500,000 workers in the next two years.

**October 12th, 2023, New York** - On World Sight Day, an annual day of awareness to focus on vision impairment and eye health, the social enterprise [VisionSpring](#) has announced that it has screened the vision of half a million factory workers in a coalition to improve worker wellbeing and livelihoods in apparel and footwear supply chains.

The Clear Vision Workplace alliance brings together leading businesses including Levi Strauss, the VF Corporation (owner of brands including The NorthFace, Vans, and Timberland), Warby Parker and Deckers Brands (owner of brands such as UGG and HOKA) with USAID, VisionSpring and more than 150 manufacturers.

VisionSpring dispensed eyeglasses to 188,000 factory workers, 78% of whom received their first-ever pair.

The widescale screenings in Bangladesh, India and Vietnam has revealed a major but solvable problem – one in three workers producing the world’s apparel and footwear is struggling with uncorrected blurry vision.

*“Serving half a million workers demonstrates that this life-changing intervention scales,”* said CEO of VisionSpring Ella Gudwin.

*“There are many millions more workers in need of a pair of eyeglasses, an estimated 1.2 million garment workers in Bangladesh alone. We invite brands and manufacturers to join the alliance so we can give every one of them the glasses that will extend their careers and protect their livelihoods.”* she added.

The benefits of vision correction are felt particularly by workers over the age of 35, who are experiencing age-related vision deterioration. For working adults, clear vision improves their ability to carry out detailed tasks, helping to increase earnings, improve job security and support career progression. Meanwhile the factories they work in benefit from higher productivity, better quality of work and less waste.

According to the World Trade Organisation, Bangladesh, India, and Vietnam export more than 17% of the world's apparel, by value, a proportion that is growing year on year. A clear vision workforce is an essential competitive advantage.

Each of the US businesses involved in the program works with factories in their supply-chain to arrange and pay for screenings. The eyeglasses that are dispensed to participants in the program are funded by Warby Parker.

Kim Almeida, Director of Programs, Levi Strauss Foundation commented:

*"At the Levi Strauss Foundation, we're dedicated to improving the lives of the women and men who make our products. We do this by exploring sustainable solutions to the most pressing issues facing apparel workers. Through our Worker Well-being program, we've learned that most workers don't have access to vision care.*

*VisionSpring's approach offered a solution that demonstrated scalability and a positive impact on worker productivity and well-being, helping us impact the lives of workers within the Levi Strauss & Co. supply chain.*

*Through our partnership with VisionSpring, we've seen that providing workers with optometry care can have a profound impact on not only their productivity and earning capacity, but also on their ability to take care of their families and participate in all the intricate aspects of life."*

Jens Aas, Worker & Community Development Program Manager, VF Corporation, commented:

*"The effect of this simple intervention is powerful and immediate. Clear vision empowers people to stay in their job longer, increase their income potential, and experience improved quality of life.*

*Correctable blurry vision is a problem that, if businesses, non-profits and government all work together, can be solved. As members of the Clear Vision Workplace alliance, VF is proud to be playing our part."*

Neil Blumenthal, Co-Founder and Co-CEO of Warby Parker said:

*“Doing good is ingrained in everything we do and as our business scales, our impact is continuing to grow in tandem. For every pair of eyeglasses we sell, we distribute a pair to someone in need through our Buy a Pair, Give a Pair program, and we’re proud to have provided more than 13 million pairs of glasses across 75 countries to-date.*

*This impact has only been possible thanks to our partners—including VisionSpring, who has been our partner since the program launched in 2010. We’re thrilled for VisionSpring on reaching this significant milestone of screening over half a million factory workers through its Clear Vision Workplace alliance and are excited to continue our work together.”*

Brooke Beshai, Vice President, Sustainability and Compliance, Deckers Brands, said:

*“We are proud to partner with VisionSpring, who shares our commitment to a more just world. Meaningful partnerships like this provide people with the resources they need to flourish—including equitable access to vision care.*

*Alongside the Clear Vision Workplace alliance, we are dedicated to doing good in the communities in which we operate and look forward to creating change together.”*

# # #

## **Media Contact**

Melissa Bromley: [Melissa.Bromley@visionspring.org](mailto:Melissa.Bromley@visionspring.org)

## **About VisionSpring**

Founded in 2001, VisionSpring is the social enterprise accelerating the use of eyeglasses in emerging and frontier markets. Our mission is to increase lifelong earnings, learning, safety, and well-being through eyeglasses for people vulnerable to poverty. We believe in the wonder of clear vision for everyone and envision a world in which all who need glasses will have them to see well and do well by 2050. As of 2022, VisionSpring corrected the vision of more than 10 million people living on less than \$4 per-day, unlocking more than \$2 billion in income earning potential. VisionSpring has received honors from the Skoll Foundation, Aspen Institute, World Bank, Duke University, and Tribeca Film Festival, among others. Their work has been covered by [BBC](#) | [The New York Times](#) | [The Economist](#) | [The Lancet](#) and more.

[www.visionspring.org](http://www.visionspring.org)

*This press release is made possible by the support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of VisionSpring and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.*