

**Provision of low vision services for northern Tanzania;
Creation & implementation of a systematic approach to service delivery and
modeling for eastern Africa**

Report for July - December 2009

This is the final year of the low vision pilot project. During this term activities continued as scheduled. Most of the month of November was used to compile and review results of the project.

Low vision cases.

During this period, a number of children and adults received low vision services at KCMC Hospital and from the optometrists we trained. However we couldn't get any information from Arusha and Manyara as the trained optometrists are no longer working in the regions.

Region /hospital	New cases (Children)		Follow up (Children)		Adults		#spects prescribed	# spects obtained	# IV devices prescribed	# LV devices obtained
	B	G	B	G	M	F				
ARUSHA										
KCMC	18	19	7	6	15	9	16	16	9	9
KILIMANJAR	5	7	-	-	19	3	12	10	15	15
MANYARA										
MARA	0	0	6	5			6	0	2	0
***MWANZA	19	14	30	37	1		-	-	94	94
SINGIDA	7	5	0	0	4	2	12	8	-	-
SHINYANGA	0	0	6	11	2	3	8	8	-	-
Total	39	45	49	59	41	17	54	42	120	118

***Due to recent increase of children with albinism to one of the Annexes, the assessment was done in collaboration with the optometrist and other eye care partners in the region.

Congenital and developmental cataract cases at KCMC

Children coming to KCMC Hospital with cataract continue to benefit from the comprehensive services that include intensive counseling of parents, good surgery, and clinical and optical assessment and follow up after surgery. After a number of months without a dedicated pediatric ophthalmology which led to lower level of productivity, Dr Lee Woodward, a volunteer pediatric ophthalmologist arrived in July. From July to December 2009 the following number of children had cataract surgery

	Boys	Girls	Total children	Total surgeries
July	4	3	7	7
August	7	2	9	14
September	7	4	11	15
October	5	3	8	9
November	11	8	19	24
December	10	6	16	24
TOTAL	44	26	70	93

Training activities

The Childhood Blindness and Low Vision Coordinator was involved in teaching on the annual course on developing a “Childhood Cataract Program” which was conducted in September. Ten participants from 8 countries joined the course.

Diploma and certificate students at Patandi Teachers Training College had a one day workshop on how to support children with low vision. The workshop was organized by KCCO’s Childhood Blindness and Low Vision Coordinator together with Marianne Kooij. The workshop was held at Patandi Teachers’ Training College. Further, first year diploma students from Patandi had a training (at KCCO) to provide more skills enhancement, particularly related to the eye care needs of children.

A two day workshop with teachers and optometrists from seven regions in northern Tanzania was held in Moshi to evaluate activities and challenges during the pilot project. This was also an opportunity to provide additional skills in reporting and advocacy. The workshop received outstanding feedback from its participants. The following are some of their comments:

“This workshop is an excellent means of learning and experiencing the low vision work done by other specialist teachers from different regions. I must say this is the best. I strongly recommend we consider having this kind of gathering at least once a year.”

“Thought time was very short we had outstanding inputs. I can promise you that all of us have brought back to the workplace some thoughts, some insights which should hopefully make us do better in serving the children with low vision in our settings”



Head teacher Mwereni Primary schools presenting success and challenges met

In early December we conducted a session with parents of children with visual impairment at Mwereni Primary school. The session was held to build awareness among the parents concerning the needs of children with low vision, the use and care of spectacles and other magnifications, clothing for albino children and parental responsibility on children with low vision.

“Will take this opportunity to thank the organizers for your really great sessions. It has been particularly helpful to me since I didn’t know much on the need of my child who is low vision; I thought the school can just do most of the things”. Comments from one of the parents.

Follow up visits

Fortunate Shija and Marianne Kooij and the low vision therapist from KCMC visited St. Francis Primary School. 14 children were assessed and a few children were sent to KCMC for further low vision assessment. All children who were prescribed glasses received them at KCMC. At Mwereni Primary School, Elizabeth Kishiki and Marianne Kooij discussed the management of children with low vision--mainly the importance of observing each individual child in and outside the classroom.

Evaluation

As part of our end of project evaluation, Karin van Dijk together with Elizabeth Kishiki met with District Education Officers in various districts to encourage the district authorities to become more responsible for facilitating transport (for children to go for eye examination and low vision assessment) and for purchase of spectacles and low vision devices. Most of these officers are keen in assisting children with visual impairment; the key step is helping the school administrators prepare and submit a budget in a timely fashion. This will have to be a focus of work in the future.

Follow up visits were also made to 6 annex/schools for the blind to observe and assess the work that specialist teachers and other teachers are carrying out as well as to review clinical records. Four annex were visited by Karin van Dijk with Elizabeth Kishiki and two were visited by Karin van Dijk with Fortunate Shija. The general observation and data from these visits is in the evaluation report being prepared by Karin van Dijk.



Karin van Dijk and Elizabeth Kishiki assessing the level of vision of a child in Longido Primary School

Finally, the team (Karin van Dijk, Elizabeth Kishiki, Marianne Kooij, and Paul Courtright) spent quite a bit of time reviewing findings and preparing the next application to Dark & Light. The new application builds upon existing work, benefiting from lessons learned from the pilot project. In the new application, work will expand to southern Tanzania and throughout all programme areas, we will take advantage of changes in the Ministry of Education staffing at the district level to build up local capacity to both supervise and support needs of children with low vision.

Completion of ICHD/MPH by Elizabeth A. Kishiki

In September Elizabeth Kishiki (KCCO's Childhood Blindness and Low Vision Coordinator) successfully completed her Master's degree studies in Public Health carried out at KIT in Amsterdam. As part of her MPH she did a qualitative study on the knowledge of primary health workers on childhood blinding eye diseases. The findings show that knowledge and skills are still quite limited. At the present time, childhood blindness is not in the national basic training curriculum of nurses, clinical officers. A copy of the dissertation will be sent to Dark and Light

Childhood cataract outreach activities in Mwanza

In mid November, KCCO's Ms. Fortunate Shija joined the MoH and CCBRT for the 6th Mwanza pediatric outreach campaign to identify and treat children with cataract in the Lake zone of northern Tanzania. This resulted in 62 surgeries on 38 children. All parents of these children benefited from intensive counseling before and after surgery. The project was jointly organized by the KCCO, CCBRT, and the MoH and

was funded by Heart to Heart Foundation. Children needing low vision services were served by the Dark and Light Low Vision Project.

We would like to express our profound thanks to Dark and Light for their financial support during pilot period which enabled us to provide services to children with visual impairment.

Report by Elizabeth Kishiki