
Activities Report 4th quarter (October-December) 2009

DRS- Direct Referral Site services in the community in Kilimanjaro & Arusha

During the 4th quarter 308 men and 403 women were examined and treated on outreach. Among them 68 people were transported for cataract surgery. The Eye Department has taken over most of the running of DRS now with input and service support from KCCO. With the upcoming addition of diabetic retinopathy screening services, DRS will continue to evolve.

Rolling out VISION 2020 programmes in eastern Africa- Ten by Ten

The KCCO Ten by Ten initiative, with major funding from the Swiss Lions, aims to provide support to 10 VISION 2020 programmes in eastern Africa by the end of 2010. This initiative is being carried out in partnership with Ministries of Health and NGOs.

North Shoa Zone, Ethiopia

North Shoa Zone plans were finalized this quarter and 3 members of the team were at KCCO for training in management, bridging strategies, and refining strategies. The team started programme activities with some local training of Woreda workers, health extension workers, and others. They started screening activities in the Woreda, providing screening and medical treatment for 790 patients and cataract surgery for 62 patients.

Fort Portal, Uganda

In spite of the loss of the fulltime ophthalmologist at Fort Portal (he was transferred to another region), the team there has rallied. The clinical officer in ophthalmology has stepped in to keep outreach running and Dr Nkurunkuza travels to Fort Portal twice a month to operate on cataract patients recruited through outreach.

Western Region, Burundi

As indicated in the Western Region plans, the first step was to renovate the tiny operating theatre in Bujumbura. This was accomplished on time and within budget. Six nurses came to KCMC Hospital for on-the-job training in operating theatre assisting. All spoke Swahili as well as their national language and French so the training was a great cultural experience too. With the completion of training and the renovations to the theatre, the team will start the new year with plans to reach patients in need of eye care services throughout the Western Region.

Vakinankaratra Region, Madagascar

The newly established Vakinankaratra VISION 2020 Committee met in November, reviewing the progress achieved since last year. The growing confidence of the team and the strong partnership between the MoH and SALFA (the implementing NGO) and other groups was in evidence. The practice of providing “free surgery” to all patients who are identified through outreach (found throughout Madagascar) remains a challenge for the programme. In the last quarter of 2009 the SALFA hospital did 192 cataract surgeries (a 34% increase from the 4th quarter of 2008). Most significantly, the team increased service delivery for Vakinankaratra Region by 90% compared to the previous year. With assistance from KCCO they have developed their 2010 plan. Seva Canada has started providing support to the team to provide more outreach services to the large region.

Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital, Blantyre, Malawi

KCCO assisted the QECH team and partners in the southern half of Malawi to develop a plan for a Child Eye Health Tertiary Facility that will serve the needs of all of the catchment area. The plan builds on work that Dr. Khumbo Kalua has carried out as part of his PhD dissertation. Different partners will support different activities, which will allow us to evaluate different approaches to identify and refer children in need of medical and surgical services. KCCO’s Fortunate Shija spent about a week with the field team learning more about their activities, similarities and differences to Tanzanian approaches.

VISION 2020 programmes in Uganda

Masaka Region

The 3 year programme in Masaka, Uganda (supported by Wilde Ganzen) wound down at the end of this year. During the course of the project, several key mid level eye workers left eye care and the project ophthalmologist was transferred from the Region and not replaced. These are typical of the problems that challenge eye care services in Africa.

Lira Region

The programme in Lira Region, Uganda (also supported by Wilde Ganzen) also suffered the loss of their project ophthalmologist (early in programme implementation) but thanks to a well trained and energetic manager and a cataract surgeon, the program there came close to meeting most of their targets and in this quarter operated 180 cataract patients.

Gulu Region

In December KCCO’s Edson Eliah met with the Gulu Regional ophthalmologist, Lions Aid Norway and the Uganda national prevention of blindness coordinator to explore ways that KCCO could assist the Gulu programme.

VISION 2020 programmes in Tanzania

Mbeya Region

The Mbeya Region program, with running costs supported by Eye Care Foundation and management support through the Lavelle Fund for the Blind, has continued to run well under the leadership of Dr Hemed Kilima. Around twelve sites are visited, covering approximately 1.2 of the 2.4 million people in Mbeya Region. This quarter there were 8 outreach visits, providing examination for 893 people, and transporting 77 back to the hospital for cataract surgery.

Dodoma Region

In collaboration with Heart to Heart Foundation (South Korea) the KCCO worked with the team from the MoH in Dodoma Region to prepare a three year VISION 2020 plan. With support from the Nuffield Foundation, a team from Dodoma came to KCCO for training in planning, management and bridging strategy. Unfortunately, the application had to be pulled at the last minute.

Mara Region

Although financial support for the Mara Region VISION 2020 programme came to an end in March, due to global financial crisis, KCCO managed to continue mentorship throughout the year and in the 4th quarter Seva Canada provided some funding for outreach activities. The team managed to examine and treat 1,824 people and do 234 surgeries in the quarter. Edson Eliah spent time in Mara this quarter helping the team with reporting and advocacy with district and regional health authorities.

Assistance with VISION 2020 planning in Gisenyi, Rwanda

At the request of the Fred Hollows Foundation KCCO facilitated the planning for Zone 5 (base hospital in Gisenyi in western Rwanda) in early December.

Understanding glaucoma in a difficult setting

Dr Claudia Silva-Solomon kindly agreed to help complete the final examination and interviews of patients blind from posterior pole causes, the most common of which is glaucoma. To our surprise we found that all but one patient had sought and received care from KCMC or the DRS system, indicating that it is used and effective at providing access to rural patients. Unfortunately, though, the study did remind us that the nature of glaucoma makes it very difficult for patients to recognize or even recall symptoms until far too late to help. The chronic nature of the disease and unpalatable treatment options also pose challenges. Findings from this work, supported by Seva Canada and the Fred Hollows Foundation, have been submitted for consideration for publication in a professional journal.

Childhood blindness and low vision

At KCMC, there were 57 cataract operations on 43 children this quarter. Support for transport and other expenses is provided by Light for the World. With Dr. Lee Woodward, volunteer paediatric ophthalmologist, settled into place this quarter, meetings were held to strengthen service delivery for children and their parents. Counseling and tracking activities, supported by Dark & Light Blind Care, are now better situated.

Key informants to find children in need of surgical and low vision care

The AED supported programme in the three districts of Karatu, Babati, and Lushoto continued to train key informants and to provide screening of children with severe visual impairment. During the quarter 178 children with significant vision or eye health problems were identified by key informants and provided either medical, surgical or refractive services. In Madagascar (also supported by AED) training of key informants and health centre staff led to a very active outreach in Mandoto, identifying 4 children with congenital cataract in the area. The team in Madagascar summarized their experiences at the Vakinankaratra Regional VISION 2020

meeting, obtaining commitment from the regional director of the MoH to support childhood blindness activities. In preparation for the return of newly trained paediatric ophthalmologist Dr. Hoby Randrianarisoa (University Hospital, Antananarive, Madagascar) a meeting was held with KCCO, the University Hospital, MoH, CBM, and the Lions Club to outline the steps to be undertaken to launch paediatric eye care services in Antananarive.

Dr. Courtright attended the AED programme review meeting in Washington DC in early November, summarizing findings from a review of a number of the medical and surgical programmes supported by AED. At the request of AED, KCCO and the Seva Foundation prepared case studies and a summary report of programme success and challenges.

Documenting global issues in childhood blindness

At the request of PLOS Medicine, Dr. Courtright recruited Dr. Parikshit Gogate and Dr. Khumbo Kalua to be co-authors on a paper reviewing the current situation of childhood blindness in developing countries. This paper is now published and available on the KCCO website or on request from KCCO.

Integrating low vision services into VISION 2020 programmes

This was the final quarter of the final year of the Dark and Light Blind Care funded pilot project to improve low vision services for children in northern Tanzania and several activities took place:

KCCO's Fortunata Shija, Elizabeth Kishiki, and Marianne Kooij held a 2 day workshop in Moshi with teachers of the blind and optometrists from northern Tanzania who have been part of the program. They reviewed progress to help assess what has worked and what has not over the past three years of the pilot project.

Karin van Dijk, low vision specialist, returned to KCCO to undertake a formal evaluation of the project. Karin, Fortunata, Marianne, and Elizabeth spent a number of days in the field and visited 6 schools to document changes made as a result of the programme and to assess changes still needed. Karin's evaluation report is on the KCCO website.

Diploma and certificate students at Patandi Teachers' Training College enjoyed two workshops (at KCCO and at the college) with Marianne Kooij and Elizabeth Kishiki to learn more about how to support children with low vision in the classroom setting.

At Mwereni Primary School Elizabeth and Marianne conducted a special session with the parents of children with visual impairment focused on helping them learn about supporting their children's special needs, use and care of spectacles and other magnification devices, and protective clothing for children with albinism.

Marianne Kooij finished her work for Visio-Sensis in Tanzania and departed in December; she will be missed but, as part of plans for 2010, will be back to assist the team with training in the coming year.

Pediatric surgical outreach in Mwanza

With support from the Korean organization, Heart to Heart Foundation, KCCO once again organized a pediatric cataract surgical session in Mwanza, along with KCMC

and CCBRT. Fortunate Shija, working with Lucas Kaji, does the groundwork to find patients. At the November outreach 137 children received medical, refractive and surgical services with 53 pediatric cataract surgeries done. Assuming that restoring sight to a blind child will avert 50 or more years spent in blindness, the outreach averted 2,650 years of life in blindness. Drs. Hall and Woodward (from KCMC) and Dr. Bowman (from CCBRT) provide the surgery and follow up. Fortunate remained in place an extra week to be certain that the children were measured for their first pair of spectacles before they left and that all parents understood the procedures and need for follow up. A copy of Fortunate's report is on the KCCO website.

Health Systems Strengthening

Much of KCCO work to assist development and mentoring of VISION 2020 programmes in Africa entails health systems strengthening. We will include special projects or activities on this topic with this heading in the future.

African Health Systems Initiative project

In this quarter the KCCO initiated the AHSI project, an endeavor with colleagues in the MoH in Kenya, Malawi, and Tanzania to assess existing task shifting strategies and test approaches to strengthen service delivery at the primary level. In all three countries application for ethical approval is underway and the AHSI planning meeting will be held in the next couple of months. KCCO made a presentation regarding the AHSI project at the IDRC in Ottawa in October. Edson Elish and Dr. Lewallen participated in an AHSI meeting (all grant recipients) in Nairobi in October.

Documenting the importance of management for VISION 2020

At the request of PLOS Medicine, Dr. Lewallen and Dr. Amir Bedri prepared a paper outlining the importance of good management systems in order to achieve VISION 2020 in Africa. A copy of the article is available on the KCCO website or on request.

Evaluation of Seva Canada/CIDA support to KCCO for strengthening service delivery

The report from the evaluation of KCCO's multi-year collaboration with Seva Canada (supported by CIDA) to strengthen service delivery in eastern Africa was finalized this quarter and KCCO and Seva Canada reviewed it with CIDA in Ottawa. The report suggested expansion of support to Seva Canada and KCCO and both organizations worked on a five year grant.

Training of MMed (residents in Ophthalmology) at KCMCollege

MMed degree candidates, Dr Amadou Alfa-Bio (from Benin) and Dr. Marvice Okwen (from Cameroon) both started the field work for their dissertations this quarter. Dr Amadou is studying the impact of presbyopic spectacles in elderly rural Tanzanians, which is part of the CIHR supported gender and blindness research project (see below). Dr Marvice (supported by the African Health Systems Initiative) is working on a project to evaluate the short term impact of enhanced supervision on primary eye care services in Mwanga District of Kilimanjaro Region. Dr Godfrey Furahini's MMed dissertation work (supported by Duke University) was accepted for publication in *Ophthalmic Epidemiology*

The community ophthalmology course that KCCO provides for MMed focused this quarter on epidemiology of several important causes of blindness including cataract,

glaucoma, trachoma, onchocerciasis, as well as basics of the VISION 2020 initiative. CBM supports KCCO in their work with the residents.

Dr David De Wit kindly agreed to provide training for MMeds and some KCCO staff in STATA, a statistics programme that KCCO will be using in future. In both didactic sessions and private tutorials he provided many of the basics that the MMeds will need to do the work required for their theses. This training was made possible by a grant from Duke University.

Nuffield-supported Certificate Course in Community Ophthalmology

This course, in its 4th year now, was run in a new way this year. Rather than have individuals from 8 different programs come for 2 months of lectures, discussion and planning, this year we decided to focus on 4 *teams* including ophthalmologist, hospital director, manager, and head nurse. The teams were from Sava Region, Madagascar, North Shoa Region, Ethiopia, Dodoma Region, Tanzania, and Gulu Region, Uganda. Due to time constraints by the team from Gisenyi, Rwanda (the ophthalmologist was appointed to also be the hospital director!) we only managed to get part of the Gisenyi team for training. This new format recognizes the fact that it really takes a team to implement changes in eye care. Ophthalmologists gathered first for 3 days to determine what their hospital directors needed to know about VISION 2020 and eye care in order to lend their support for a VISION 2020 program. The directors then joined their ophthalmologist for a week to learn and discuss the issues. Out of this, came a concrete VISION 2020 plan and a lot of new understanding on the part of the directors, ophthalmologists, and other support staff about the differences in providing services for a VISION 2020 "District" and simply running a hospital service.

"This was very interesting. We expected it to be simple and relaxing but it turned out to be tough because the homework, which appeared simple, was actually difficult. It was difficult because we had to simplify the knowledge of ophthalmology to suit the understanding of the chief executives or medical directors of our hospital. This even enabled us to make better presentations in the subsequent weeks."

The Nuffield Foundation supported the MSc programme of Edson Elish in London; Edson returned to KCCO and with Titus Nyange, led much of the course programme in the quarter. The five year Nuffield Community Ophthalmology grant comes to an end shortly and with partners at the University of Cape Town and ICEH a new application is being submitted. Much has been learned over the five years of this grant.

Bridging strategies to link communities with eye care services

With support from the Seva Foundation, KCCO conducted its 5th annual course on bridging strategies in November. The participants were a varied group, including colleagues from Tibet, by special request. The interaction and learning was facilitated by Dr. Edward Nkurunzuza, from Uganda, our external faculty member. Many of the participants stayed for the management course, which was held the following two weeks. Ms. Penny Lyons (Seva Canada) assisted course participants with various course activities. Although difficult for the KCCO faculty, there is considerable savings in cost by holding these courses back to back.

“This was a very interactive week with experiences shared from different parts of the world. The lectures revealed real life situations from the different groups and the participants were able to learn and benefit from the session greatly”.

Management for VISION 2020- the Fred Hollows Foundation Course

In addition to some team members from the Nuffield course, another 11 managers and eye health workers joined this year for the Fred Hollows Foundation management course, coming from Kenya, Uganda, Madagascar, Tanzania, Rwanda, South Africa, Ethiopia, and Nigeria. Dr Gerald Msukwa (Malawi) graciously agreed to help as faculty again this year and KCCO’s Edson Eliah took on a greater role. This course has become so popular that we will offer it again in February 2010 to accommodate all that want to take it.

“Increased skills on human resource issues such as conflict resolution, motivation and how to conduct meetings in the shortest way possible!” was noted by one participant as what she gained from the course.

“I have learned that leadership is not telling people what to do and standing aside, but it is supporting, guiding and monitoring the team,” noted another.

The FHF conducted an evaluation of FHF-supported activities at KCCO (primarily the management course); the team met and talked with many previous participants to the course. A copy of the evaluation can be obtained from FHF Eastern Africa.

Reducing gender inequity in blindness

The World Sight Day theme for 2009: “Gender inequity and blindness” served as a focus for KCCO advocacy, research, and programme activities. Dr. Courtright made a number of presentations on the subject around World Sight Day, including at various events organized by Seva Canada in Vancouver, at the University of British Columbia, at the CIHR’s Institute for Gender & Health, and at CIDA in Ottawa. A presentation was also made and video-taped for a World Sight Day national event in Peru. KCCO was the lead organization for the drafting of the World Sight Day Report.

Ms. Herieth Mganga was selected in November from among many excellent applicants to be the new KCCO Gender & Blindness Coordinator. She has already been in the field many times, catching up rapidly on the activities there. The CIHR and Dark & Light supported project to assess the impact of using “women sentinels” to improve use of eye care services (particularly by women and girls) required most of Herieth’s time this quarter. As part of this project, Dr. Amadou is assessing the impact (on quality of life) of providing presbyopic spectacles on both men and women.

Trachoma back on the KCCO agenda

At the request of the new International Trachoma Initiative (ITI) Dr Courtright became a member of the new ITI Trachoma Expert Committee, which met in Atlanta in December. There are many changes underway since the structural changes in ITI over the past few months and KCCO looks forward to working with ITI to eliminate

trachoma. In December KCCO and ITI signed an agreement to re-start the Trachoma Information Service (TIS), which languished due to funding over the past year. The TIS will start in early 2010.

Dr Paul Emerson from the Carter Centre spent 2 days at KCCO in November discussing a joint proposal (also including the LSHTM) to assess ways to improve the quality and quantity of trichiasis surgeries in Africa.

Ophthalmic Resource Centre for Eastern Africa

ORCEA continues to have support from Seva Foundation. With the departure of Mhula Ngassa to university in Canada, we have had to cut back hours of opening. The services remain the same; material available continues to grow and the KCCO website continues to expand.

Drs Lewallen and Courtright spoke by invitation at the 2nd congress of the Fundacion Vision Mundi in Logrono Spain in October. Topics included gender and blindness, childhood blindness, refractive error, trachoma, malaria retinopathy, and training programs at KCCO. Besides being a delightful meeting, it was a chance to make new contacts and strengthen old ones. As a result, on the request of KCCO, the Fundacion Vision Mundi agreed to sponsor a Cameroonian doctor for 4 years of ophthalmology residency at KCMC. Dr Blanche has already started!

KCCO visitors

Elizabeth Couzens and Alice Mwangi (Fred Hollows Foundation evaluation)
Penny Lyons, Executive Director of Seva Canada
Dr Paul Emerson, Carter Centre
Karin van Dijk (Dark & Light supported low vision project)
Dr. David de Wit (Duke supported training)
Dr. Edward Nkurunziza (Seva supported Bridging Strategy course)
Dr. Gerald Msuka (FHF supported Management course)
Ms. Amelia Chamberlain (ORBIS International)
Dr. Saul Rajak (LSHTM, trachoma research activities)

KCCO Development News

KCCO welcomed Herieth Mganga to be the new KCCO Gender & Blindness Coordinator.

Titus Nyange and Fortunate Shija spent a week in Edinburgh in December for a "crash course in epidemiology."

Gisella Massue spent a week in South Africa for a workshop on EU grants, at the request of Dark and Light Blind Care.

Finally KCCO embarked on the development of the next five year KCCO strategic plan starting with interviews of key KCCO stakeholders. This will continue over the next few months with a three day planning session, facilitated by Mr. Michel Maurer, planned for April.