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Activities Report 2nd quarter (April—June) 2011

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

The Ministry of Health (MoH) and the KCCO/KCMC - DRS programme continues to work together providing eye care services in Kilimanjaro Region and two districts of Arusha Region. In this quarter the team made 17 outreach visits examining and treating 2,059 people (1,019 males, 1,040 females). A total of 150 (73 males, 77 females) people were identified with operable cataract, and 111 were transported to KCMC for cataract surgery. Community outreach is funded by Seva Canada.

Supporting VISION 2020 programmes in eastern Africa

Western Region, Burundi

Accessibility to some parts of Burundi has continued to pose a great challenge to programme activities; due to the country's mountainous geography the health workers find it difficult to move freely from one outreach site to another. Nonetheless, the team was able to screen and treat a total of 2,267 patients (1,140 males, 1,127 females), and 326 patients (143 males, 183 females) received cataract surgeries.

An instrument technician from Western Region attended a 3 week course on instrument maintenance conducted at KCCO, supported by the IAPB Capacity Building Grant. The trained technician will be able to repair and maintain a number of instruments that are not currently working, including the slit lamp used at the ISHP clinic.

North Shoa Region, Ethiopia

A new manager for the programme, hired when the previous manager left for another job, was oriented and started working in this quarter. It appears that the health extension workers who were trained by the programme have not met expectations. Many of them engage in other health care activities in their districts to earn extra money. Lack of cooperation from these health extension workers makes it harder for the outreach team from Debre Berhan to get the desired number of people on outreach.

In spite of the challenges the programme faces, a total of 7 outreach visits were done this quarter, during which a total of 434 patients (246 male, 188 female) were examined. Among them 31 patients (14 male, 17 female) were brought in to the base hospital for cataract surgery. Walk in patients totaled 115 (68 men and 47 women).

Luapula Region, Zambia

This quarter witnessed the opening of an optical workshop in June at Mansa General Hospital with support from the hospital management and partners. An optical technician was recruited and capacity building for refraction and optical training skills was held prior to the opening of the workshop.

Based on the plans set in the first quarter, training of various cadres was done this quarter; two district eye coordinators, community health workers and rural health centre staff were trained with the aim of increasing the health personnel capable of mobilizing patients during outreach as well as promoting awareness in the community.

During this quarter, the team managed to conduct 20 outreach visits, supported by both the Swiss Lions and Geneva Global. A total of 1,481 patients (705 male, 776 female) were examined and treated while providing cataract surgery to 64 patients (22 male, 42 female) 83 additional surgeries (42 male, 41 female) were performed on walk-in patients.

In the coming quarter the programme plans to continue training of the various district eye coordinators so they may be able to assist with eye care activities in their respective districts.

Gulu Region, Uganda

Programme activities in Gulu started in this quarter by providing training to various eye care workers in the region. Refresher training was provided to the ophthalmic clinical officers (OCOs) from the districts of Gulu, Nwoya and Amuru which the programme covers. The aim of the refresher course is to equip the OCOs with the knowledge that will enable them to find patients with vision loss, educate people regarding cataract, assist them with examination and screening and conduct post operation follow up. Training of village health teams (VHTs) was also conducted during the reporting period.

Sensitization meetings with district leaders were done; the goal here is to encourage various community leaders to inform the population about cataract, services available and how to promote health seeking behavior to the community, and also to brief the district leaders about the proposed plans (in particular, the role of health centres as a site for periodic screening, the role of the OCOs and VHTs).

The team will start outreach in the next quarter.

Vakinankaratra Region, Madagascar

Dr Richard is now well-settled in Antsirabe and the team in Vakinankaratra continued to extend services to people in need of eye care. This quarter the team made 12 outreach visits, screening and treating 992 patients (369 males, 623 females). Out of this number 38 cataract surgeries (24 males, 14 females) were performed. Additionally, 84 surgeries (34 males, 50 females) were done on walk-in patients.

Atsinanana Region, Madagascar

In this quarter the team made 5 outreach visits to communities. Both centres (Vatomandry and Toamasina) have managed to screen and treat 335 patients (143 males, 192 females). A total of 96 surgeries (40 males, 56 females) were done among outreach patients this quarter. Additionally, 235 cataract surgeries (101 males, 135 females) were performed on walk-in patients. Equipment worth \$32,000 (Sherritt mining company contribution) has been received by MoH in Antananarivo, and a special handover ceremony has been planned for early July 2011.

Sava Region, Madagascar

In this quarter the team screened and treated a total of 2,375 patients, of whom 1,213 were males and 1,162 were females. A total of 197 (94 males, 103 females) received cataract operations: 165 at the SALFA clinic and 32 at the Sava Regional Hospital. Thanks to regional partners for their efforts.

Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital, (Child Eye Health Tertiary Facility), Malawi

One training session for the key informants (KIs) this quarter included 27 KIs (17 males, 10 females) from Machinga District. One screening outreach was conducted, during which 16 children (7 boys, 9 girls) were screened. Of these children 7 (4 boys, 3 girls) were referred to the hospital. 4 children (2 boys, 2 girls) were found to have cataract.

At the base facility, a total of 1,124 children (608 boys, 516 girls) were examined and treated; 103 of them (62 boys, 41 girls) were admitted to hospital and a total of 155 children (96 boys, 59 girls) received surgeries. 28 children (18 boys, 10 girls) needed unilateral or bilateral cataract surgery, resulting in cataract operations on 42 eyes (21 boys, 21 girls). 26 children (12 boys, 14 girls) returned for follow-up and 26 children received glasses.

Surgical instruments and consumables for paediatric surgery were provided by a donation from AED and Seva Canada.

Kitwe (Child Eye Health Tertiary Centre), Kitwe, Zambia

The Childhood Blindness and Low Vision Coordinator made visits to all health centres from which health workers were trained. Transport has continued to present the biggest problem for parents living in the rural areas due to the long distances involved. During the quarter, a total of 621 children (314 boys, 307 girls) were examined and treated; 92 eyes were operated for various eye diseases, of which 22 eyes (12 boys, 10 girls) received cataract surgery. Of the 22 children, 19 were scheduled to come for follow up within one month, and all of them returned. The other three children are expected to come later this year. 50 children received eye glasses.

Mara Region, Tanzania

The Mara team continues to provide services through funding from Seva Canada. This quarter the team made 7 outreach visits screening and treating 1,375 patients (691 males, 684 females). A total of 106 people (44 males, 62 females) received sight-restoring surgery. Charles Gendo, the cataract surgeon in Mara, spent two weeks at KCMC Hospital to improve his surgical skills. During this time he also

learned how to use and service a vitrector donated to Mara programme by CBM Canada. The programme received three cataract sets and two magnifying loupes from Seva Canada

Lira Region, Uganda

Thousands of people who were not able to access eye care services in Lango Sub-region of Uganda now have the opportunity to access services after the Lira programme activities were extended into two more districts of Amolatar and Dokolo. Intensive community education efforts (using radio talk shows and megaphones) were done in the new districts. Additionally, meetings with the Ministry of Health at the district level were held to inform the various government officials of the programme and to seek their support.

During the quarter, a total of 6 outreach visits were done and 1,847 patients were examined and treated for various eye conditions. 163 patients had their sight restored through cataract surgery. An additional 286 patients received cataract surgeries at the base facility as walk-ins. 87 patients were refracted and given eye glasses.

The VISION 2020 programmes in Madagascar, Malawi, Zambia, Burundi, Ethiopia, and Uganda receive support from the Swiss Lions; additional support for work in Madagascar, Malawi, and Tanzania receive support from Seva Canada. Lavelle Fund for the Blind supports activities in Ethiopia, Lira, Uganda, and Burundi. Eye Care Foundation has recently started supporting work in Lira, Uganda. Geneva Global support activities in Luapula, Zambia. Dr. Courtright and Dr. Suzanne Gilbert (Seva Foundation) joined various officials of the Swiss Lions for a debrief of programme activities in Zug, Switzerland in April.

Childhood Blindness and Low Vision

This quarter 40 eyes (32 children, 15 boys, 17 girls) were operated for cataract at KCMC Hospital in Moshi. Light for the World subsidizes transport and other expenses for this programme. Counseling and tracking activities are supported by Dark & Light Blind Care. 12 children (8 boys, 5 girls) who were diagnosed with glaucoma were also included in the project.

At KCMC the low vision specialist assessed 24 children with low vision (16 boys, 8 girls); 9 got their prescribed glasses and 15 received optical low vision devices. She also assessed 21 adults with low vision. The trained optometrists in Kagera, Kilimanjaro, Mara, Manyara, Shinyanga and Singida assessed a total of 103 children and 67 adults with low vision.

For the first time 13 teachers from Mugeza primary school in Kagera benefited from low vision training organized by KCCO and facilitated by Ms Elizabeth Kishiki. Alcheraus Augustine (low vision specialist) and Audax Kyomwenge (special needs education officer), both trained at KCCO, assisted Elizabeth Kishiki in facilitating the training. Two teachers from Rugambwa Secondary School also attended this training.

Students at Mwereni annex for the blind received ten tables with chairs as a donation from KCCO and VISIO to be used in their low vision class. The plan is to have a

model classroom for other annexes. Additionally, every one of the 65 children in this annex received a pillow with a cover, thanks to Marianne Kooij and VISIO.

Ms. Kishiki joined MoHSW and CCBRT in early June for the 9th Mwanza paediatric outreach campaign to identify and treat children with cataract in Mwanza. The outreach resulted in 63 surgeries in 44 children. All parents of these children benefited from intensive counseling before and after surgery, and the surgery was followed by clinical and optical assessment. The project was jointly organized by the KCCO, CCBRT, and the MoHSW. Funding was provided by the Johnson Foundation and Zaf optical.

Elizabeth Kishiki attended a paediatric ophthalmology meeting organized by ORBIS International in Cape Town, South Africa and presented KCCO's community ophthalmology work on childhood blindness. ORBIS is focusing on developing a comprehensive model for child eye care in sub-Saharan Africa with the goal of strengthening existing eye care services for children and establish new services where none currently exist.

In April KCCO facilitated the first national Madagascar paediatric eye care planning meeting. The planning meeting brought together stakeholders from government, NGOs (CBM, Lions, ORBIS, Mormon Development Aid), and others to create a five year plan for addressing paediatric eye care for the island. The plans will be disseminated to all participants for finalization and various partners have agreed to start funding some of the management, human resource, and infrastructural changes needed to meet the eye care needs of Malagasy children. The meeting was supported by funding from Seva Canada, CBM, and ORBIS International.

Health Systems Strengthening

Management for Ophthalmologists

Six participants from Benin, Congo, Eritrea, Zambia, Uganda and the Seychelles participated in KCCO's week-long management course for ophthalmologists. This course aims to develop the management capacity of ophthalmologists, who frequently find themselves expected to run and manage eye units with little training. Topics covered during the course included communication, problem-solving and organizational sustainability. Dr Ciku Mathenge served as external faculty during the course. All participants reported being impressed by the knowledge they gained, which will enable them to run eye units more smoothly in their respective settings.

AHSI workgroup meeting

Research partners from Malawi and the US flew to KCCO for a brief workgroup meeting to clarify several points of research before follow up data collection begins in July. Over the two days investigators defined terms, developed forms, and agreed on standardized procedures. Manisha Tharaney added valuable input as a consultant. The AHSI project, which investigates task shifting among several cadres in Tanzania, Malawi and Kenya, is currently in its second year.

IAPB & KCCO Knowledge Translation Workshop

In conjunction with a multi-site paediatric study in Tanzania, Zambia, and Malawi, the Academy for Educational Development funded a workshop on translating research evidence on eye care in Africa into policy and programmes. Research teams from the three countries were joined by WHO personnel and others, and under the guidance of Dr Pierre Ongolo-Zogo spent several days understanding the theoretical background of briefs before drafting summaries for policy recommendations. As the praxis of knowledge translation catches on in the eye care field, we hope that researchers and policy makers can look forward to more and more evidence-informed decisions.

Reducing gender inequity in blindness

Sentinels stay involved

Sentinels who attended training in entrepreneurship held earlier this year all received referral cards to monitor how many patients they continued to bring to DRS. The KCCO Gender and Blindness coordinator also made monthly phone calls to monitor the progress of the former sentinels' business projects.

In this quarter three outreach were conducted, one in Arumeru and two in Hai. Of 393 patients who were examined and treated during these visits, 187 of them were referred by sentinels, demonstrating their engagement. A few sentinels even continue to escort patients to the outreach. KCCO is planning to conduct interviews with sentinels at the end of August 2011 to find out if and how the sentinels have benefited from the training and whether or not they continue referring patients to DRS.

Microfinance and Health Education

On April 6, 2011 the community based health educators who work in microfinance groups were invited to KCCO for the first project evaluation meeting. The educators talked about the strategies they have been using to disseminate education about eye care, and how they pass the information about the DRS dates to people. They expressed their opinions of the programme's progress and offered suggestions for changes.

Ms Finda continued to monitor the activities of the microfinance health educators – visiting and educating the assigned microfinance groups. The educators were originally assigned between four and five groups each to educate, but where new groups have formed, educators have also included them. There were two DRS visits; one in Kisiwani in May and one in Hedaru in June. Out of 245 people that attended the two DRS, 205 were referred by the community educators. There were 27 patients with operable cataract, out of whom 24 accepted the treatment. There will be a second evaluation meeting in July.

Ms. Sophie Butcher, Australian medical student who helped set up the project, finished her research project, submitted her dissertation, and has returned to Australia to finish her medical education.

KCCO published a paper this quarter: Mganga H, Lewallen S, Courtright P. Gender and blindness: Evidence from Africa. *Middle East & Africa Journal of Ophthalmology* 2011;18:98-101.

Trachoma

In mid April Dr. Courtright joined the GET 2020 meeting in Geneva, jointly presenting (with Dr. Michael Gichangi, NEC, Kenya) the outcome of a pilot “Trachoma Action Plan” meeting for Kenya held in Nairobi the previous quarter. KCCO continued to work with the McKinsey team and ITI on the TAP format. KCCO also joined the International Committee for Trachoma Control (ICTC) and worked with the group to draft and refine the “InSight 2020” document. Dr. Courtright also attended the ITI Trachoma Expert Committee meeting in late June.

KCCO’s Hilton-supported trichiasis research, planning, and evidence-based intervention project continued on course in Mali and Niger with community based assessments of uptake and outcome of trichiasis surgery and assessment of productivity of trichiasis surgeons.

Other activities and news

Ms. Mganga assisted the KCMC Eye Department’s Kilimanjaro Diabetic Project during the quarter.

Dr. Courtright was the guest speaker at the British Columbia Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons in May in Vancouver. Meetings were also held with Seva Canada and other donors in the Vancouver area.

Dr. Lewallen was the external survey trainer for the Ntungamo, Uganda RAAB in early June.

Drs. Courtright and Lewallen remained on sabbatical; they will return to Moshi in mid August. During the quarter they published a paper: Courtright P & Lewallen S. Global blindness 2010: What do we know? *Expert Opinion in Ophthalmology* 2011;6:385-392

In late June they joined a meeting on “cataract in Africa” held at Johns Hopkins, presenting findings from various research activities related to cataract surgical service delivery.

Research on glaucoma, carried out by KCMC residents under the supervision of KCCO, was published this quarter: Lewallen S, Hassan HG, al Attas AH, Courtright P. A population based study of care seeking behaviour in rural Tanzanians with glaucoma blindness. *Journal of Glaucoma* 2011;20:361-5

Please contact us if you are interested in copies of these publications.

Visitors and volunteers at KCCO

Maryn Lewallen, USA
Ken Bassett, UBC /Seva Canada
Abdul Pirbhai, Seva Canada
Justin Sherwin, UK
Dr Ciku Mathenge, Kigali Health Institute
Manisha Tharaney, USA
Dr Khumbo Kalua, Malawi
Dr Pierre Ongolo-Zogo, Cameroon
Dr Colin Nelson, Canada