
Kilimanjaro Centre for Community Ophthalmology

Annual Report

2021



Above: Outreach screening activity in Dodoma Region, Tanzania



About KCCO

Eliminating avoidable blindness in Africa

The Kilimanjaro Centre for Community Ophthalmology (KCCO) was established in 2001 in response to the VISION 2020 initiative, a global campaign aimed at eliminating avoidable blindness by the year 2020, the product of a series of consultations between the WHO and NGOs working toward blindness prevention.



Above: A health worker conducts a visual acuity test in Tanzania

VISION

Our vision for eye care in Africa is a continent where all Africans can access high quality, patient-centered eye care, provided by Africans in well-functioning systems.

MISSION

Our mission is to strengthen African health systems and partnerships through the provision of eye health training, the conduct of research, the facilitation of planning, and change implementation to achieve the goals of VISION 2020 and GET 2020.

IMPACT

- Capacity Building
- Facilitation of planning and change implementation at different levels of the health system
- Epidemiological and operational research to inform practice, programme and policy.

Message from the directors

KCCO carried out its multipronged mission (research and evidence generation, program implementation and capacity strengthening) across Africa in 2021 despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The different programs mentored by KCCO showed resiliency and a great capacity for adaptation.

As a result, the number of adults screened and served in 2021 (more than 108 000 adults) was back to the level of 2019, while the number of cataract surgeries performed increased by 8% compared to 2019. In 2021, more females (5047) than males (4975) benefited from cataract surgery. This is a testament to the continuous efforts of KCCO, like-minded donors and partner hospitals, to close the gender gap in eye health.

Regarding the pediatric population, more than 34 000 children, most of them are living in hard-to-reach rural areas, were screened and served. Overall, the number of cataract surgeries in children increased by 42% from 2020, and by 89% compared to 2019.

In the fight against trachoma, KCCO continued its activities as a local implementing partner to support trachoma elimination efforts in Tanzania, as well as globally as a WHO Collaborating Centre for Trachoma (hosted at the University of Cape Town in South Africa).

These successes would not be possible without the support of core partners and friends of KCCO. Thank you for your support and your trust.



Dr. Robert Geneau, KCCO
Executive Director



Mr. Edson Eliah,
KCCO Tanzania Director



Dr. Paul Courtright,
Chairman of the Board

Vision 2020

Table 1. Screening and surgical interventions for adults at 10 KCCO-supported sites

Vision 2020 program	Screened and treated			Cataract surgeries		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Vakinankaratra Region, Madagascar	5,069	3,727	8,796	277	288	565
Atsinanana Region, Madagascar	2,256	2,051	4,307	456	536	992
Sava Region, Madagascar	3,395	3,527	6,922	236	227	463
Mara Region, Tanzania	3,761	3,685	7,446	343	374	717
Mbeya Region, Tanzania	5,249	4,792	10,041	222	195	417
Lira Region, Uganda	5,326	4,999	10,325	638	522	1,160
Amhara Region, Ethiopia	8,953	9,987	18,940	582	611	1,193
Mwanza Region, Tanzania	8,576	8,791	17,367	508	513	1,021
Bourgou Region, Benin	6,343	8,972	15,315	1,254	1,338	2,592
Dodoma Region, Tanzania	3,315	3,491	6,806	312	326	638
Singida Region, Tanzania	1,270	1,307	2,577	147	117	264
All sites combined	53,513	55,329	108,842	4,975	5,047	10,022

- **108,842** adults screened, of which **51%** were women
- **10,022** adults received cataract surgery, of which **50%** were women
- Overall number of cataract surgeries **increased** from 2019 (pre-pandemic)

KCCO is a mentor institution supporting 10 mentee hospitals operating in Benin, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Tanzania and Uganda.

Despite further waves of COVID-19 which affected both screening and surgical outreaches, the KCCO-supported hospitals were able to nearly match the number of adults screened in 2019, before the major public health measures of 2020. The number of cataract surgeries performed in 2021 is also higher compared to the pre-pandemic total number of cataract surgeries in 2019 - an increase of 8%.

Childhood Blindness and Low Vision

Table 2. Screening and surgical interventions for adults at 5 Child Eye Health Tertiary Facilities (CEHTF).

Sites	Total Screened		Total surgeries							
			Cataract Surgeries		Glaucoma		Other Surgeries		Total Surgeries	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
BEH/Tororo, Uganda	2390	1809	110	72	45	22	336	224	491	318
LSFEH/ Blantyre, Malawi	3084	3204	87	57	8	4	136	102	226	163
Burundi	2150	2202	86	50	23	9	152	116	261	175
Madagascar	3963	4917	34	43	6	3	19	21	59	66
Mwanza, Tanzania	5918	4529	146	101	0	0	23	28	167	131
Combined (Total)	17505	16661	463	323	82	38	666	491	1204	853

- **34,166** children screened, of which **49%** were girls
- **786** children received cataract surgery, of which **41%** were girls
- Overall number of cataract surgeries **increased by 30%** from 2020

Despite some COVID-19 restrictions, most strictly in Uganda, the key informant training, screening and surgical activities from the 5 base hospitals took place throughout the year and they were able to keep their commitments to reach and serve as many children as possible.

Follow-up in some settings was complicated by observed vaccine hesitancy - patients were afraid that if they returned to hospital they would be forced to take a COVID-19 vaccine. KCCO-supported hospitals countered this by providing focused health talks at the outpatient clinics and during trainings and screenings, so that communities understood what services eye departments have to offer, and that hospitals never force the uptake of any services.

Childhood Blindness and Low Vision

Outreach and surgical activities for the USAID Childhood Blindness Program funded project "Following up child cataract patients in Uganda" continued in 2021. Despite difficult challenges linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, the project achieved all original goals and objectives. A key achievement was the implementation of the 100 home visits to children previously operated for bilateral cataract, in parallel with other outreach activities. This was a novel activity for Benedictine Eye Hospital and KCCO. Many children lost to follow up in previous years were found and received additional services. This component of the project gave the BEH team an in-depth understanding of the challenges faced by the children, the families, and the schools, and this knowledge is feeding into ongoing discussions to improve services along the continuum of care.



Above: Interviews conducted with children and parents who were followed up with as part of the USAID CBP program.

Reducing Gender Inequality

Table 3. Screening and surgical interventions in Tanzania in areas with women microfinance members trained as case finders.

Sites in Tanzania	Total patients		Nb of community members referred by MF		Total cataract		Nb of cataract patients operated	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Mara	1434	1546	341	591	249	383	144	175
Ngorongoro	1057	1949	501	786	48	65	25	43
Mwanza	25	33	18	27	15	22	0	4
Total	2516	3528	860	1404	312	470	169	222

A total of 115 microfinance members were either newly trained or received refresher training during 2021, and they referred a total of 2264 people.

Outreach camps continued throughout the year in Mara and Mwanza Regions, but trachoma activities stopped in Ngorongoro district in Arusha Region in the latter part of the year as the program there is integrated with trachoma activities (activities paused as we await the impact survey results about the prevalence of trachomatous trichiasis (TT) "unknown to the health system" in adults aged 15 years and older).

Below: : Incentive training for a microfinance group in the Mwanza Region.



Strengthening Health Systems and Building Capacity

KCCO completed a consultancy for the Fred Hollows Foundation to support the Ministry of Public Health of Burundi in developing and finalizing a complete first draft of the country's new Strategic Eye Health Plan (2022-2027). The Plan will be launched officially during the first quarter of 2022.

In 2021, KCCO staff resumed regular in-person mentoring visits to partner hospitals in Tanzania. Due to international travel restrictions, mentoring and capacity building activities with partner hospitals located outside of Tanzania (Benin, Burundi, Ethiopia, Malawi and Uganda) took place through regular remote sessions and meetings.

Research and Evidence

KCCO co-authored one scientific paper this year:

- Flueckiger RM, Stelmach R, Burgert-Brucker CR, Courtright P, Kabona G, Mosher AW, Mwingira UJ, Harding JC, Simon A, Ngondi J. Evaluating Precision of a Trichomatous Trichiasis (TT) Super Survey with Modulating Sample Sizes in Tanzania. *Ophthalmic Epidemiol.* 2021 Aug 11:1-7.

Research continued throughout 2021 for the following projects:

- Following up child cataract patients in Uganda
 - Increasing Cataract Surgical Utilization in Central Tanzania: Alternate Community Based Intervention
 - Understanding the role of gender in trichiasis case finding in Tanzania
 - Explaining the continuing high prevalence of trichiasis unknown to the health system in intervention units: a mixed methods explanatory study in four trachoma-endemic countries
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Addressing Trachoma Globally

Table 4. Screening and surgical interventions realized during 2021 for all trachoma programs in Tanzania.

Sites	Total Screened at outreach		TT cases		Number accepted surgery		Operate d eyes	Number epilated	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M&F	M	F
Korogwe	104	211	15	18	7	8	23	6	0
Rombo	7	33	7	32	4	20	30	0	2
Ngorongoro	794	1598	9	44	7	28	16	1	3
Kilindi	737	885	20	72	12	35	66	3	5
Combined	1642	2727	51	166	30	91	135	10	10

Full geographical coverage in casefinding and management was achieved in Korogwe, Rombo, and Ngorongoro Districts. The trachoma program activities in Kilindi District were launched this year as well.

Towards the end of the year, preparations commenced for budgets and planning for TT surgical activities to resume in the Arusha Region.

Other news and activities

KCCO's founders, Susan Lewallen and Paul Courtright, as well as our Childhood Blindness and Low Vision Coordinator, Elizabeth Kishiki, were recognized by the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) through the Vision Excellence Awards. The Vision Excellence Awards "recognise[s] outstanding contributions to advocacy, innovation, programme implementation, institution-building and disease control during the twenty years of VISION 2020".

KCCO signed a three-year grant agreement with the Fred Hollows Foundation, titled "Increasing access to equitable cataract services in four regions of Tanzania". The project will provide integrated eye health care services and capacity building in Kagera, Manyara, Tanga and Mtwara.

Financial Overview

Fred Hollows Foundation:	\$21,247.00
Sightsavers:	\$288,626.00
Seva Canada:	\$410,239.00
Seva Foundation:	\$514,445.00
Personal donations:	\$5,104.00
Novartis Pharma:	\$59,700.00
Integrative Sciences:	\$19,988.00
Total:	\$1,319,349.00

KCCO Team

We are always happy to answer any questions and can be contacted as below:

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KCCO publishes more detailed quarterly reports of our activities. Please email admin@kcco.net if you would like to be added to the distribution list.

For general enquiries, please also email admin@kcco.net.



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