

# KWALE DISTRICT EYE CENTRE



## B I - A N N U A L R E P O R T

July - December 2013

### A word from the Medical Director,

The last 6 months have been very exciting! We saw an increase, way above target, of the number of children who had sight-restoring surgery at KDEC. This is mainly because we recruited an anesthetist who visits once per month enabling us to do surgery on smaller children rather than refer them elsewhere, running the risk of losing them between care centres. We were very lucky with visits from two paediatric specialists and an orthoptist and, together, we focused on improving follow up of these children. We created a paediatric area and agreed that all children who cannot read should have their vision assessed there.

Diani Clinic and optical shop has been going almost a year now and this venture is increasing the number of people who reach us from Diani who are happy to pay for a fast track service. Our optical workshop has enabled the sale of spectacles to increase by one third this year compared with last. Even more exciting is the fact that we are celebrating 20 years of restoring sight and saving lives!

2013 celebrated 20 years of restoring eye sight and changing lives! When I reflect on the past 20 years and everything that has happened in order for us to get where we are today, a special quote comes to mind: ***“Never believe that a few caring people can't change the world. For, indeed, that's all who ever have. One, small step at a time”***

This could not be more true, and the Kwale District Eye Centre is testament to this. If you asked me at the start if I thought that we would be a huge, state-of-the-art centre, with a full time team of staff, I would have said, “you must be dreaming”.

From our humble beginnings in a small one room building with just myself, here we are today, with our 72,000th patient walking through our doors. What an achievement! This would not have been possible without the hard work, support and dedication of a few special people, who have helped us get closer and closer to this achievement one small step at a time.

In honour of these people, and of all the ups and downs we have overcome together, we will be dedicating this month to stories and photos celebrating the last 20 years. We will be uploading weekly facebook stories and information on the history of the Kwale District Eye Centre.

Please Like our Facebook page [Eye Centre – Kenya](#) and visit our website [www.eyecentre-kenya.com](http://www.eyecentre-kenya.com) to keep updated on all our top stories. Once you like our page and subscribe to our newsletter, we will keep you posted on all the happenings at KDEC, and you will be a part of every step of our journey through 2014 – and what a year it promises to be. 20 years down, and another 20 years to go.

This time if someone asks me if i think we can continue to to grow and expand like we have, my answer will not be "you must be dreaming". Now I know that we can! With our team of caring supporters, staff and friends, we can do anything. One small step at a time.

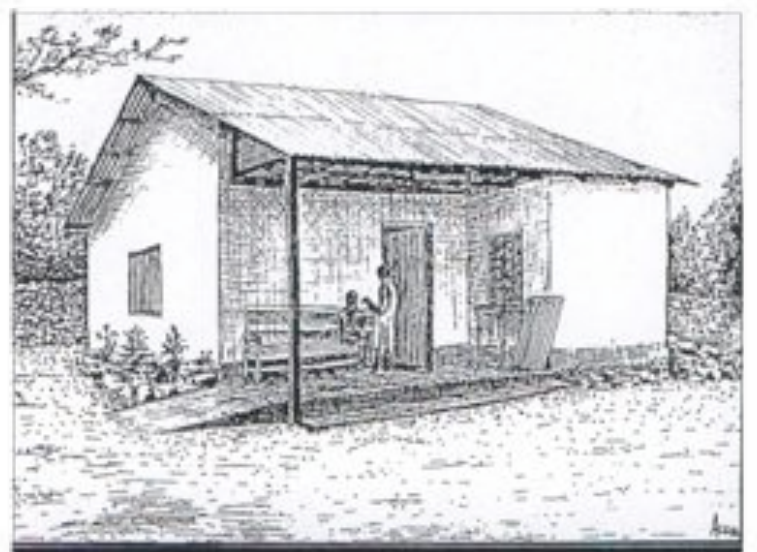


## Celebrating 20 years of service



### Our Humble Beginnings

20 Years ago we began work in this little building. Our vision was to create a place that could address needless blindness in the district. That vision is now a reality. Our building has grown, our staff has grown, our support system has grown and as a result of this, so has our reach and our impact! And it all started here!



## Celebrating 20 years of saving sight!



## An article by a local journalist...

It was just another day for eye surgeon, Dr Helen Roberts MBE FRCOphth, but her days are not quite like anyone else's. It takes her around 15 minutes to restore sight to a person blinded by cataracts, and she might treat up to 20 patients in a day. On this particular day, however, Helen's routine was interrupted by the arrival of a large cake which her staff had secretly had baked for her in celebration of the fact that it has been 20 years since Helen decided to dedicate her life to Kenya. And during that time Kwale District Eye Centre has seen almost 400,000 people and carried out 30,000 sight restoring eye operations.

That's quite an achievement, and Helen celebrated it by sharing the cake with her staff and all the patients in her clinic.

Helen's clinic, the Kwale District Eye Centre (KDEC) lies just inland from Mombasa's famous Diani Beach. And, while dinner at one of Diani's glossy hotels will cost about the same as making a blind man see, most of the local people are so poor they can't even scrape together the money for the subsidised fees: so they pay with a chicken, a few mangoes; or a smile.

KDEC never turn a patient away. Which is probably just as well when you consider the following; Kenya's rate of blindness is ten times that of the Western world; of the world's 45 million blind people 90% live in the developing world and of the millions of Kenyans who go blind, 80% need never have done so. Blindness, tragically, is largely preventable.

The magic of having one's sight restored in 15 minutes, which is all the time it takes to 'do' a cataract, affects people differently. Helen tells the story of one old man who had been blind for most of his life. Persuaded by the community worker to come into the clinic, he had his operation, walked out into the carpark, threw away his white stick, summarily dismissed the small boy who had led him around, and danced off down the road. Another man who had been blind for 15 years returned to his village and shrieked with laughter over how much his neighbours had aged. Best of all is the tale of the community worker who came across a blind man up a tree, from which a noose dangled. He was sobbing in despair; his life seemed to be worthless. The community worker lured him down from the tree, on to the back of his motorbike, and in to the clinic. The next time he saw the man, he was up a tree again: laughing, singing and cutting down coconuts.

All this comes at a cost; yet government funding is not forthcoming. KDEC is entirely funded by charity, the rest by Helen's endless round of fundraising events, 'What better gift can you give than the gift of sight?' is her campaign slogan. What indeed? Ksh8,000 pays for a cataract operation and Kshs 10,000 sponsors a partially sighted child through 15 years of schooling in a normal school (providing spectacles, thick pens, and transparent roof tiles for the schoolroom). It's not much to ask for such a precious gift.

Helen herself asks for very little. Merely the money to keep her clinic running. And, despite that fact that in 1996 she was awarded an MBE by Queen Elizabeth II, she remains inspired only by her gift. 'When you take the pads off and the patient can see for the first time' she says, 'they give a little smile. Then that smile grows and grows until it stretches from ear to ear. That's my reward'.

So, if you'd like to fuel such a smile, why not spend the best Kshs 8,000 you'll ever spend.

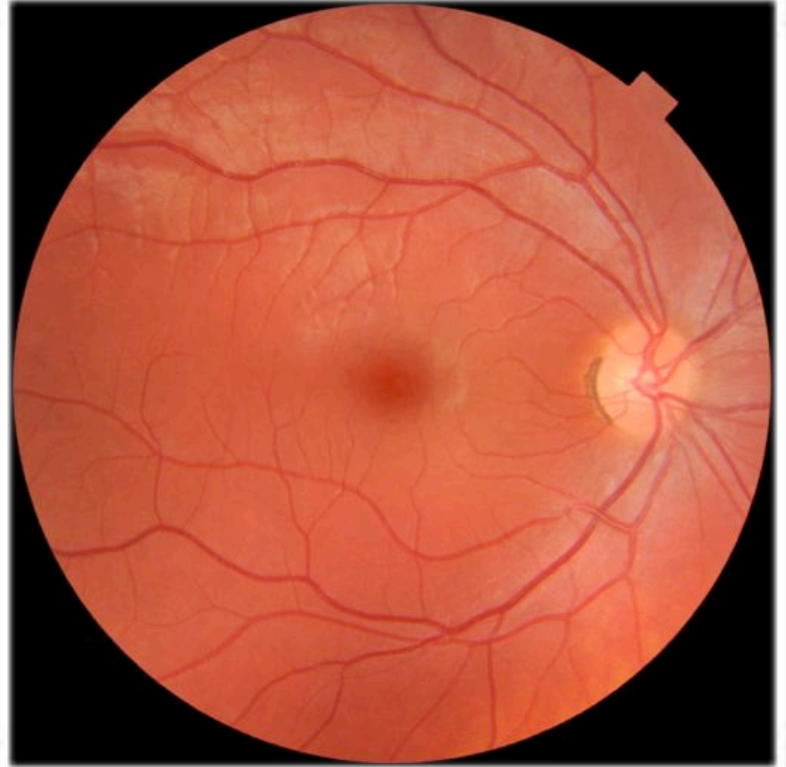


## New Equipment at the Centre

### Fundus Camera...

Following the donation of a fundus camera from Salisbury and a visit by a retinal specialist last year we really focused on getting these patients to us for treatment. This is an area of expanding need.

Diabetes is becoming much more frequent in Kenya. This disease affects the eye, often well before the patient is aware of it. Unattended there is a high rate of blindness which is most often not reversible.



*Image from a fundus camera showing sight threatening diabetic changes*

## Strengthening Relationships

Kwale County Health Stakeholders Forum continues to focus on the need for greater collaboration between public and private sectors. The newly-appointed Minister for Health of the county, Mr. Chiguzo Athmani, is especially interested in working with and empowering Community Based Organisations.

We set up this health forum 18 years ago and it is still very active, giving advice, expertise and, where possible, budgetary support to the County Health Plan. We are part of the task force that will write the annual plan for the County for 2014.



## SUCCESS STORY

At the age of 62 years old, Chadi Hinzano Menza could not restrain a smile when he shared his experience. Mzee Chadi asserts, “my happiness can be compared to that of a barren woman having her first born at a time she is expecting death to take its natural course but miracle never cease to happen!” As he explained, tears of joy were evidently dripping off his wrinkled face! Despite the fact that he was bilateral blind six years ago, at his age mzee Chadi looked energetic though now a widower with 7 children and three grandsons. Chadi used to work as seaman at the Bandari College at the coastal region of Mombasa for quite sometime; currently he is a small scale farmer and he scavenges to attain his daily basic needs particularly maize flour and water. Chadi lives in Mavirivirini village, Minyenzeni Division of the newly constituted Samburu District of Kwale District

Being bilateral blind is like “living in a cave of darkness” and Chadi didn’t know exactly where to find the appropriate treatment to cure this menace once and for all. Chadi had earlier thought of jealousy close relative and friends to be behind his misery and the thought of visiting traditional healers was in question. He comes from a community rich in cultural believes. For long, Chadi had concentrated his efforts seeking for traditional healers within and outside his area of residence who in return accepted an informal mode of payment through animal sacrifices. But Chadi’s patience to believe he will see again had by now vanished, taking it to be a punishment from ancestors. Despite his urge to see again at any cost, Chadi wasn’t aware of how to attain appropriate formal eye care treatment. Chadi didn’t loose hope and he kept on praying and reassured himself that one day, someone somewhere will restore his vision only to “breed happiness” that would “light a candle instead of cursing the darkness!”

One evening, one of his grandsons approached Mzee Chadi to inform him that an eye care service provider (the area Community Based Worker in this case) visited their school for an eye health talk at the nearby Kafuduni Primary School. Chadi was keen to listen to this new development about an eye doctor stationed at Kwale District Eye Centre (famous by the local name Magandia) about 65 Kms away. Chadi had previously heard about the good work in restoring vision to patients at KDEC. He had seen a few done surgeries and restored sight but to him this was unbearable! First he didn’t know how to locate KDEC, no one to offer financial support nor a close person to take care of him after surgery. Worse enough is the fact that he had heard rumors that during surgery, “the white lady doctor removes the human eye to replace it with a goat’s or ship’s eye!” Fortunately, the grandson informed his grandfather that the health talk by the CBW was summarized that a sponsored eye outreach was scheduled to be conducted at the school the following week of which Chadi attended and lucky to be diagnosed with bilateral cataract.

The exposure at KDEC made Chadi uneasy but a talk of reassurance managed to overcome his fears of the unknown and faced the reality. After taking the first right eye surgery, he was jubilant to see “light at the end of the tunnel”. He remembers murmuring the words, “this is an indicator of livelihood in my life again, like a thriving seedling in a desert despite scarcity of water!” Surprised to see everyone gazing at him with disbelief, he learnt that his voice had been clearly echoed by the other patients closer to him. Currently, “Chadi is like an animator spreading the gospel” not only for the area CBW but for the good work by the entire KDEC team and has successfully referred over 10 cataract patients through sponsored eye outreaches. Mzee Chadi Hinzano is now happy to have “embarked on breeding happiness” to others through sight restoration at KDEC.



## KDEC 2013 Statistics

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Activity	Targets (Base)	2013 (Base)	2012 (Base)	Targets (Taita)	2013 (Taita)	2012 (Taita)
Patient Visits	12,000	11,701	9,623	1,000	1,624	1,093
Patients seen in field	8,000	8,789	10,386	1,000	968	431
Total Operations Performed	1,400	1,366	1,415	120	78	73
Cataract Surgeries	1,000	1,006	1,090	100	66	68
Glaucoma Surgeries	80	69	78	5	4	1
CBW Referrals	900	617	654	n/a	n/a	n/a
Retinal Laser	40	45	33	n/a	n/a	n/a
Other Surgeries	200	229	247	5	8	4
Children Surgeries	50	72	56	n/a	n/a	n/a
Distance Glasses	1,500	1,539	1,155	100	96	106





As we look back at all of our successes and accomplishments in 2013, we look forward to having the opportunity to continue our work in 2014. None of this would be possible if it wasn't for all of you. We are forever grateful for all of your support over the years.



*Saving Sight  
(just another day in the office)!*

**THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR HELP AND SUPPORT THAT  
ENABLES US TO KEEP BRINGING EYE CARE TO THOSE  
WHO NEED IT!**

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