

An ophthalmic training programme in Zambia

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In Zambia, ophthalmic human resource consultants and specialists were trained abroad until 2006, and 90% of the health institutions had no trained eye personnel. The few specialists were mainly in health institutions on the Copperbelt, Lusaka and towns along the rail line.

In order to address the aims of VISION 2020 and scale up the provision of eye services to all districts by 2020, the Ministry of Health, with partners like Sightsavers, started the training of ophthalmic specialists at clinical officer and registered nurse entry level. This in-service ophthalmic training programme started in July 2006.

Candidates were selected from clinical officers and registered nurses with two years general work experience. The training programme lasts for two years and an advanced diploma is issued on successful completion of the course. Nurses receive recognition as ophthalmic nurses (ONs) and clinical officers as ophthalmic clinical officers (OCO). The trainees attend a six month practical placement at an established eye hospital/unit, such as Kitwe Central Hospital, Lusaka Eye Hospital, Mwami Mission Hospital or University Teaching Hospital. Newly added practical sites are: Livingstone General Hospital, Ndola Central Hospital, Mansa General Hospital, and St Francis Mission Hospital. Chainama College in association with the School of Medicine, University of Zambia underwrites and confers the Diplomas to graduates.

The course covers the following; anatomy and physiology of the eye, pathology, microbiology, general ophthalmology, ophthalmic surgery, refraction, primary eye health, ophthalmic care (for ophthalmic nurses), clinical ophthalmology (for clinical officers), VISION 2020, health systems research, leadership and management, and eye health promotion.

From July 2006, 25 OCOs were enrolled, eight of which have graduated while 17 are still in training. 23 ONs have been enrolled, seven have graduated and 16 are still in training. After

receiving the basic diagnostic eye kit to start providing eye services, the graduates were distributed to various district hospitals where units did not have this equipment. Below is the table showing the graduates distribution.

Distribution of Graduates (2006 intake)

Hospital	OCO	ON
Kitwe Central	1	1
Ronald Ross General hosp		1
Kasama General hosp		1
Mbala General hosp	1	
Kaoma urban Clinic	1	
Lusaka Eye hosp	1	1
Ndola DHMT		1
Solwezi Urban Clinic	1	
Monze Urban Clinic	1	
Sinazongwe, Malima RHC	1	
Mtendere Mission hospital	1	
Choma Gen hospital		1
Kalulushi DHMT		1

Mr Kapeso OCO has done extremely well by setting up the eye services at Mbala General Hospital. Mrs. Ama A. Ado (OCO) and Mrs. Twaambo M Hachinzobolo (ON), both at Kitwe Central Hospital eye unit, and Mr. Mdaniso Mkandawire of Monze are doing well in the already established clinics. The managers and communities have appreciated their contribution to the eye services and following is a closer look at Mr. Mdaniso's work in Monze District of the Southern Province.