

COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND 2021 Annual Report

Country Overview

Preventable and avoidable blindness is a major public health problem in Zimbabwe. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 125,000 (1% of the total population) people in Zimbabwe is living with blindness, 62,500 of whom are blind from cataract which gives a backlog of 60,000 cataract surgery operations. This backlog was attributed by lack of cataract surgical equipment, consumables and inadequate qualified personnel in the rural provinces and high costs of cataract surgeries.

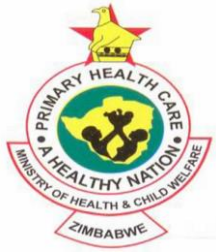
According to available statistics from the Ministry of Health & Child Welfare, eye diseases rank among the top five causes of attendance in out-patient health facilities nationally. The major eye conditions include refractive errors, conjunctivitis, cataract, trauma and glaucoma. According to the National Health Strategy (2009 to 2013) for Zimbabwe, it is estimated that 80% of blindness is avoidable and treatable. The major causes of avoidable blindness include cataracts, glaucoma, trauma, diabetic retinopathy and refractive errors. The majority of the blind are the older persons (4,7% of the total population- 2012 Census Report) and most cannot afford to access eye health services.

In its drive to prevent blindness in communities, Council for the Blind has encountered difficult situations where there are unending shortages of drugs and other eye ointments in the country due to non-availability funds to purchase such medical requisites and also issues to do with GMP certification of the companies where these essential medicines are procured.

As our clientele is mainly serviced by extensive travel, there were some disruptions of our schedules of outreach activities because of erratic funding of such activities and also COVID -19 lockdown in the first quarter of 2021.

Overview of Council for the Blind

In 2021, the organization had a staff compliment of. There were two new areas of expansion where the organization ventured into Masvingo and Chiredzi.



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Staff compliment

The organization now has a staff compliment of 81, dotted across all 10 Provinces of Zimbabwe.

A) Provision of eye care services during 2021 province by province.

1. Matabeleland South

Matabeleland South province covers six districts and has been without an ophthalmologist for some time. However, visiting ophthalmologists from Richard Morris did surgical operations in 2021.

The eye unit in Gwanda was temporarily converted into a COVID isolation centre, this was discussed and agreed with the Provincial Medical Director; Matabeleland South –Dr Chikodzore who is our guest speaker. As soon as the COVID pandemic subsides everything will return to normal. The unit will come back in better shape as it was repainted. On a positive note, there were some surgeries done in the eye unit early 2022.

Activities in 2021

In 2021(January to December) there were 604 cataract operations done. The areas that were covered include Brunapeg, Matobo, Filabusi, Gwanda and Plumtree.

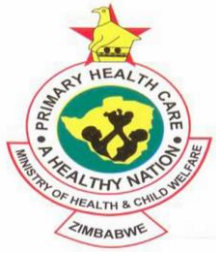
Personnel

The province relied on an ophthalmologist, from Richard Morris. The province has at least one ophthalmic nurse in each district but due to brain drain quite a number of OPNs have left.

Equipment

There was no equipment that was procured for the eye units in the year 2021.

Medicines and Medical Requisites



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The MCAZ requires a GMP certificate for some cataract medicines that are being procured in India. The cataract kit is being procured without these medicines. The medicines are running out and there is need for a quick solution.

2) Matabeleland North

The Province of Matabeleland North has seven administrative districts with a district hospital in each. Council for the Blind supported mobile outreach activities, providing purely curative services in the districts since the project was launched. The following districts were reached Tsholotsho; Lupane; Inyathi; Hwange were reached during the outreaches. A total of 333 cataract surgeries were done during the months January to December 2021. Outreaches were funded by OAK foundation.

Personnel

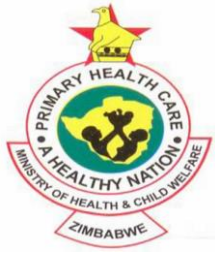
The province had no ophthalmologist as was the case with Matabeleland South. We continued sending teams from Bulawayo after every two weeks. Council for the Blind in conjunction with Richard Morris were seconding team comprising of ophthalmologists and other support staff to the mentioned district hospitals.

Equipment

Victoria Falls eye unit has been run down. Lupane eye unit somewhat exists though the structure that was built by the project is now being used for other hospital activities and has reserved one room for eye services.

Medicines and Medical Requisites

No medicines are available at hospitals. The outreach team has to carry own provisions each time a visit is made to the districts.



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3) Masvingo Province

Council for the Blind opened a new eye unit in Masvingo town at the Masvingo Provincial Hospital. The eye unit conducted its first cataract surgeries in October 2021 where 13 patients were operated.

CBM operates through Morgenster and the total reach for cataract surgeries for Morgenster for the Province in 2021 was 1110.

4) Midlands Province

Midlands cataract outreaches were supported by Council for the Blind and OAK foundation. Areas covered were Shurugwi, Kwekwe and Gweru.

The province now has two ophthalmologists since lobbying was done in 2015. A total of 109 cataract surgeries were done from January to September 2021.

Midlands held a RAAB in June 2021. The results are yet to be endorsed by the MOHCC.

5) Mashonaland West

Norton eye unit does not carry out outreach activities due to overwhelming numbers of clients that it receives. With support from both CBM International and CBM Global, the eye unit managed to carry out 1247 cataract surgeries in 2021. Mashonaland West through support from PEEK project carried out 109 cataract surgeries

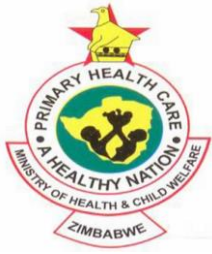
Norton eye unit received tremendous support from CBM Germany. An operating microscope, slit lamp and phacomachine were procured for the eye unit. The eye unit was also refurbished in 2021 from a CBM UK supported grant. The new rooms added included refraction room, visual field room, consultation rooms, reception. The renovations cost USD\$250,000,00. Water supply was a problem at the eye unit. A 100m borehole was drilled and a tank installed.



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(Norton's new wing)



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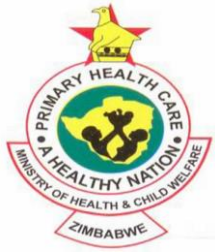
Norton's operating microscope being assembled by Zeiss technician

Norton now has three ophthalmologists, a visiting optometrists as part of the Norton team.

6) Mashonaland Central

Mashonaland Central now has an ophthalmologist. No cataract outreaches were done by ZCfB in 2021. CBM has signed a five-year project with Mashonaland Central which will be implemented through Helpage as from 2022.

7) Mashonaland East Province



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Mashonaland East cataract surgeries programme continued to be funded by CBM. A total of 439 cataract surgeries were done from January to December 2021. Through CBM, Mashonaland East was bought a Biometry machine as the one they were using was now technology obsolete and replacements of worn out parts was difficult.

Funding for outreach programmes was reduced from monthly to twice a year, which affected the eye units numbers tremendously as the population of Mashonaland east was used to be ferried from their hospitals to Marondera Eye Unit for surgery. The old outreach model made use of the minibus which was procured for the project to enable patients to be ferried from their respective districts to the Marondera Provincial Hospital for surgeries.

The new model promotes and encourages patients to come to the eye unit on their own for operations.

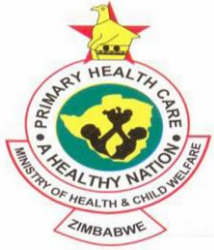
There are nine districts hospitals in Mashonaland East. All the hospitals were covered by Dr Magava. The Ophthalmologist was trained on phaco emulsification and this was done locally in Harare. Though Marondera had a phaco emulsification machine procured, it has not been in use. The machine is now absolute and cannot be used as the consumables for its use are no longer manufactured.

8) Manicaland Province

From January to September 2021, Manicaland had a total of 411 cataract surgeries done. The eye unit is now being supported by CBM through Helpage from October 2021.

The provincial ophthalmologist retired in the month of September 2021. Manicaland now has no ophthalmologist.

9) Harare Metropolitan Province



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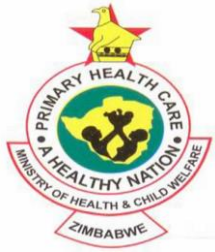
Sekuru Kaguvi eye unit had a total of 420 cataract operations were done in 2021. The eye unit is still operating on emergency mode since the surge of COVID19. The eye unit was being supported by both ZCFB and Helpage through CBM in 2021. Sekuru Kaguvi eye unit received an operating microscope from CBM International in the beginning of 2021.

CBM procured a vehicle to support PEEK community and schools screening programme.



PEEK programme vehicle that was procured under CBM

PEEK schools screening resumed in October 2021 and activity is currently ongoing (*combined report overleaf*).



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A number of programmes took place. Strengthening of Retinoblastoma services was a project that started in 2020 June but was crippled due to COVID-19. The programme enrolled 16 children to date, lost four of them as the condition is life threatening. 12 retinoblastoma survivors are currently receiving chemotherapy and some have been enucleated.

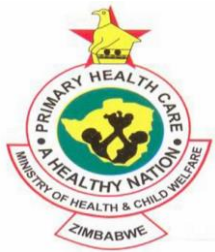
Low vision services are currently being expanded with training of extra 6 personnel in low vision. The training took place in the month of November 2021.

10) Bulawayo Province:

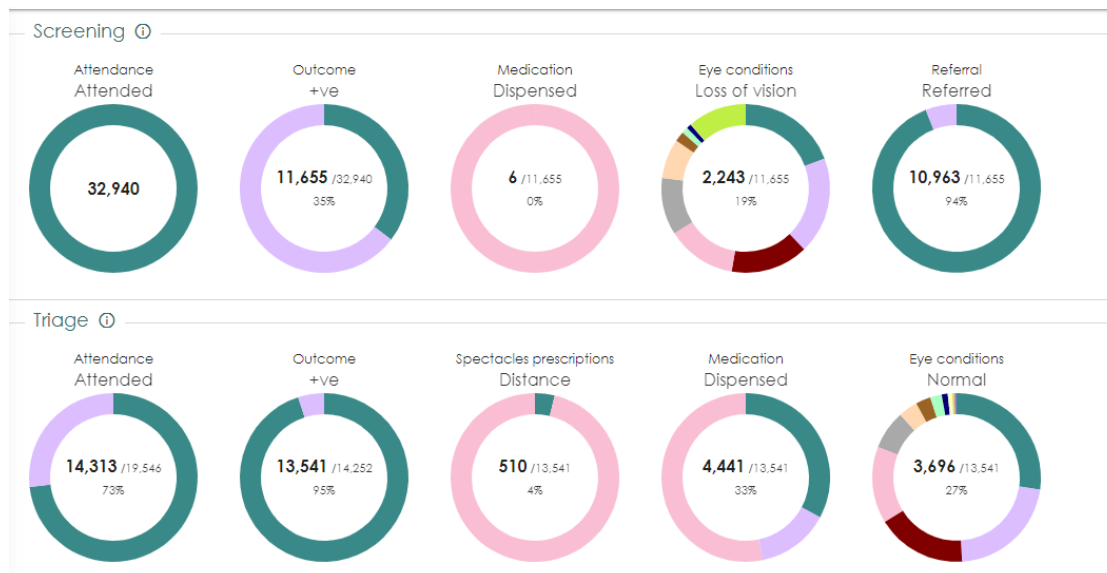
Currently, OAK foundation and CBM are funding cataract surgeries at UBH. UBH is currently supporting Matabeleland North and South Provinces which do not have ophthalmologists or any Provincial eye units. From January to date, has done 1392 operations.

Mpilo is also being supported with consumables and had 63 surgeries done in the period under review.

PEEK community and schools screening programme is currently ongoing with 32940 people been reached in 2021.



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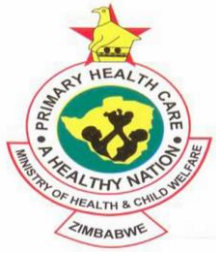


Low vision services are currently being rolled out in Bulawayo province with 2 Ophthalmologists, 3 Refractionists and 12 OPNs being trained in the programme.

Strengthening Retinoblastoma project was rolled out in September 2021. Currently all 4 children who were in the programme are stable and doing well with 2 having undergone enucleation and prosthesis.

Since the inception of retinoblastoma program in Matabeleland, a great improvement has been noted. This is in relation to five children who had so far been enrolled into the program. This program has brought in notifiable achievements which are as follows;

Out of the five children who have been enrolled into the program, 2 have completed their chemotherapy cycles and have also undergone surgery. However, a greater success has been noted in one of our patients who is Andrew Dube. One cannot tell that he once suffered from Retinoblastoma and only has one eye left.

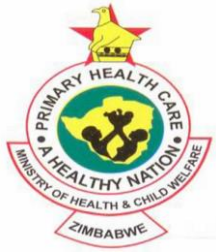


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Andrew was enrolled in the programme in February 2021 and received 6 cycles of chemotherapy and enucleation. He has since received his artificial eye. Andrew was born tenth to Mr and Mrs Dube of Gwanda.



Andrew Dube with a fungating eye when he came for consultation at UBH



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Andrew after enucleation



Andrew after prosthesis

C) Optical Workshops

Production of spectacles is still the main source of revenue for the organization. On average, the optical workshop produces 10000 spectacles annually, in 2021 there were 5784 spectacles were produced.

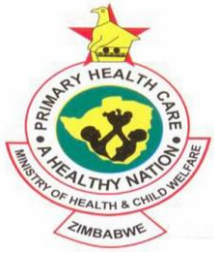
The low output was due to the limited movement of clientele due to the COVID pandemic.

E) Education of the blind and Visually Impaired

Whilst the assistance and funding rendered to Council for the Blind by its partners is acknowledged, the department regrets the recurring economical woes the country is experiencing as this has affected the implementation of the following programmes;

- awareness creation
- outreach and advisory visits
- literature production

The above have been put on hold since 2014.



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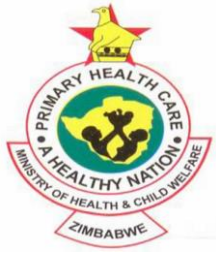
Mtshabezi resources room

The resources centre for Mtshabezi caught fire this year. Council for the Blind assisted in the resuscitation of the building through donation of roofing materials.



Students at Mtshabezi Primary School resource room.

G) Rehabilitation



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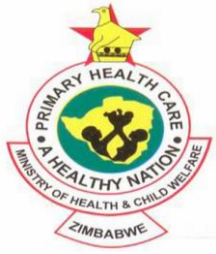
The department has been crippled due to lack of funding since most programmes are for preventive service.

Forecast for 2022

1. Conduct cataract operations at base and on outreach in all Council for the Blind based eye units expand to new territories
2. Conduct refractions and spectacles production with expansion to new sites
3. Expansion of PEEK project

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