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The Mozambique Eyecare Project: Implementing a Model That Addresses Uncorrected Refractive Error in Lusophone Africa.

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Recommended Citation

Thompson, S. J., Wallace, D. "The Mozambique Eyecare Project: Implementing a Model That Addresses Uncorrected Refractive Error in Lusophone Africa". Paper submitted at World Congress on Refractive Error 2010, Durban, South Africa.

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THE MOZAMBIQUE EYECARE PROJECT: IMPLEMENTING A MODEL THAT ADDRESSES UNCORRECTED REFRACTIVE ERROR IN LUSOPHONE AFRICA

Diane Wallace MPA
Stephen Thompson MSc

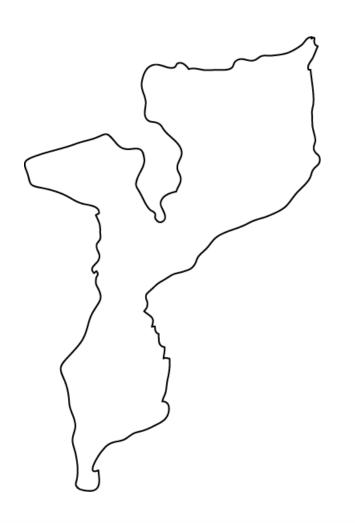


giving sight giving sigh

Background: Eye care in Mozambique



- Population ~ 22 million
- Ophthalmology focused
- HR capacity
 - 11 Ophthalmologists (4 expats)
 - 1 Optometrist
 - 23 Cuban trained refractionists
 - 17 Ophthamic Technicians (OCO's)
 - 2 Orthoptists
- No training program for optometrists pre-2009



Rationale for program



- Burden of visual disability
- Optometrists lacking as part of the comprehensive eye care team
- In-country capacity development for sustainable, locally-owned eye care services
- North-South collaborative development partnership
- Research to understand local challenges and develop local capacity for future research
- Broader development impact on other countries in Lusophone countries

Educational Model



- MEEM:
 - 2 year diploma
 - 4 year degree
- Rationale for the model



Current Status





- Students enrolled in y1 and y2 at Unilurio in Nampula
- Revision of the model due to legislative changes
- Introduction of expat faculty (linguistic challenges)
- 3 x registered PhD students, 1 Masters
- Baseline studies being conducted

Challenges



Language of teaching

- Limited number of books in Portuguese
- Most Optometry books published in English
- 2 out of 3 students felt their reading skills in English were poor
- Lectures delivered by Spanish speaking faculty



Language



Programme

- Implications for Interaction with local partners
- Logistical challenges
- Language and official protocol



Faculty recruitment





- 63% of students preferred to be taught in is Portuguese
- Limited number of qualified postgraduate Portuguese speaking optometrists
- Two Spanish-speaking lecturers:
 - Maria Lopez (Spain)
 - Vivien Ocampo (Colombia)

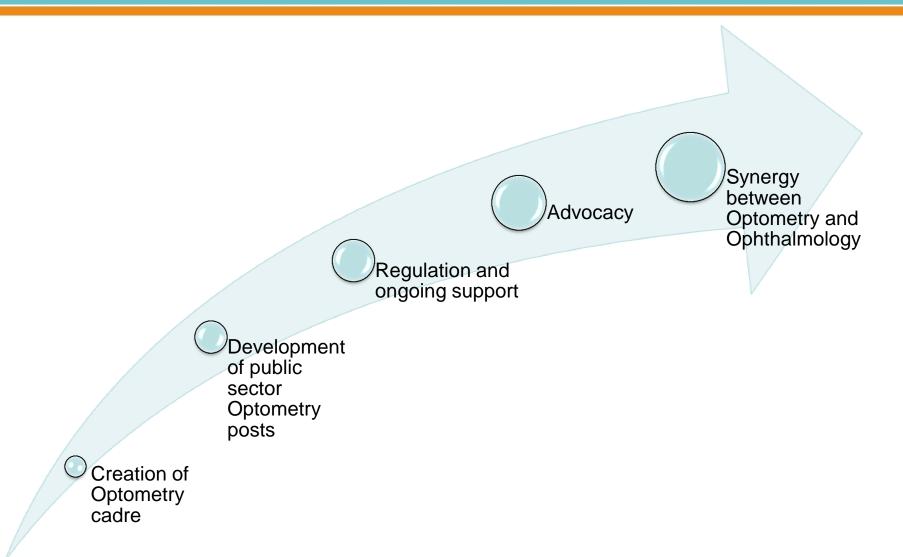
Perceptions of the profession



- Eye care in Mozambique is currently Ophthalmology focused
- Limited local reference to Optometry
- 66.6% of students surveyed thought that Optometrists performed operations for cataract and eye disease.
- Challenge: To position the profession of Optometry in a country that currently has no reference point.
- Documentary describing the profession of Optometry aired locally

Government buy-in





Partnership for Implementation



- Funded by Irish Aid
- Administered by Irish higher education institution as academic development support partner
- Restrictions i.e. meeting funding outputs
- Changes in regulation
- Flexibility















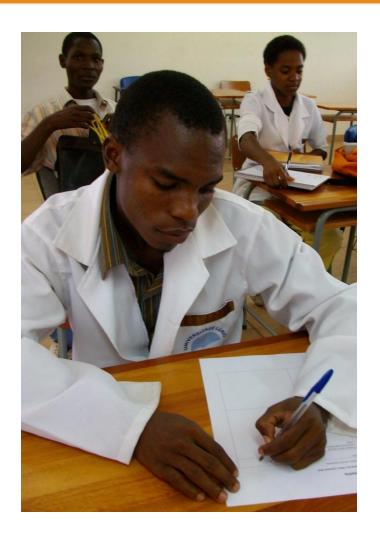




Regional concept



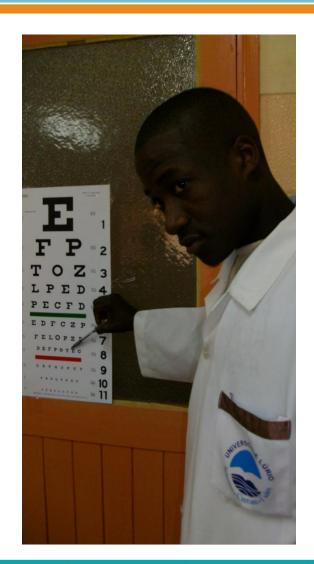
- Optometry school in Mozambique will act as a regional training centre
- Students expected to enrol from:
 - Angola
 - Guinea-Bissau
 - São Tomé and Príncipe
- Links developed between countries
- Broadening education opportunities
- Developing eye care human resources



Successes



- 42 students enrolled in the program to date
- Lots of awareness generated about the project through DIT's marketing efforts (project website, Facebook, various networks)
- Keen interest from optometrists around the globe in working on the project
- 4 Post Graduate projects started
- Clinic and training centre being built; teaching materials being translated into Portuguese.
- Cross-institutional networks being developed



Conclusion: Lessons learnt



- Flexibility required to achieve outputs, especially with regards to impact of regulatory changes
- Government buy-in essential for long-term success
- Language factor needs to be seriously considered during planning phase, but should not be a barrier to implementation
- Countries where optometry and refractive services are non-existent should be addressed as a priority rather than excluded
- Despite challenges such programs have broader developmental spin-offs (education, social and economic development)



Thank you

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