

## **BICO first quarter report 2011**

From January 2011 many activities have taken place at BICO. Two Research Assistants were recruited under the Global Base Knowledge research project; a qualitative research project which falls under the second phase of the Childhood blindness project. The Research Assistants underwent a three days training together with two part-time Research Assistants to equip them with skills on how to conduct qualitative research.

The first part of the training was conducted on the 11th of January, 2011 in the board room at Lions sight First Eye Hospital. The training started at 2.30 in the afternoon and ended at 4.30 pm. The main speaker on this day was from the International Eye Foundation in the United States of America. He spoke about the funding of the project highlighting that the project is funded by USAID. He said that the project seeks ways on how to intervene so that more people benefit from health services.

The second part of the training took place at Mount Pleasant Inn in Blantyre on the 13th of January, 2011. It started at 8.00 in the morning and ended at around 5.30 in the evening. It centred much on imparting skills to researchers on how to conduct qualitative research; for example, how to conduct a Focus Group Discussion (FGD); which is the main tool used for gathering data for a qualitative research.

The main speakers on this day were the two external trainers from College of Medicine (Mr. Francis Masiye and Mr. Vincent Jumbe). The meeting was also attended by the three Ophthalmic Clinical Officers from three districts in which the research is being done (Mangochi, Zomba and Balaka).

The third part of the training was a practical one which was conducted the following day (14th January, 2011) in Chiradzulu district at Montfort School for the blind. This was done to assess how the Research Assistants were able to apply the skills they learnt about qualitative research. The Research Assistants were then engaged in the transcribing and translating of the recordings of the FGDs.

When the Research Assistants had transcribed and translated a bit of the audio recording, another meeting was conducted in the board room at Lions Sight First Eye hospital. The meeting focussed on assessing the transcripts and the translations and better ways to transcribe and translate so that you do not lose information and meaning from the audio recording. This meeting marked the end of the three days training for the Research Assistants.

After the training the Research Assistants were engaged in the preparation of the questionnaires and communication, trying to locate the children in the three districts; Zomba, Mangochi and Balaka.

These children were grouped into doers and non-doers according to whether they came to Lions Sight first Eye Hospital or not after being told to come to the hospital. Mapping of the children was done in the three districts and it was agreed that before the study could commence in the three districts a pilot study should be done in Thyolo district.

## **GLOBAL BASE KNOWLEDGE PROJECT**

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of February a pilot study of the Global Base Knowledge was done in Thyolo where the topic guides were piloted. The team members present were Dr Kalua, Vincent Jumbe, Paul Msusa, Christopher Ndembo and Deborah Mwafulirwa.

The team started off from Blantyre for Thyolo where the interviews were booked. The interviews were scheduled to start at around 8:09 am. They team did not find many problems in terms of organizing the respondents because the people were told in advance about the visit.

In the morning an In-depth interview was conducted which was facilitated by Deborah and Paul had to take some short notes from that interview. The mother and the child were the people that were interviewed but the child was not answering properly since he is young. After the interviews an eye examination was done on the child.

The second in-depth interview was done by Christopher and Deborah was observing and taking notes from the interview. A grandfather and a child were interviewed but we failed to interview the grandmother because she was not present and both parents of the child died.

We had a lunch break of at least one hour at Chigumula area.

The first focus group discussion was conducted in the afternoon. Deborah facilitated the interview and Paul took notes from the FGD. Six people participated; three women and three men. The participants did not open up and it seemed that they did not know what a cataract is but later on they were told what a cataract is and they have known it. Dr Kalua proposed that the researchers need to have communicative posters of cataract from Ruby so that all participants have the common understanding in all sessions with them.

The second focus group Discussion was done by Christopher and Paul took notes. Six people were participated; all were women and they understood what cataract (nga'la) is and they were able to net out information comfortably.

After all the interviews, the team thanked all participants for their participation and left for Blantyre around 16:15hours. Whilst in the car, constructive feed backs were rendered to the researchers by Vincent and Dr Kalua. All the research team members agreed to re-design the FGD guide into themes and make some relevant changes to the guide. The team arrived in Blantyre at around 17:05 hours.

A three days data collection process was organised to take place in Zomba and on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March data collection for the Global Base Knowledge stated in Zomba district. The team left on the morning of 15<sup>th</sup> March and collected data on this day and on the 16<sup>th</sup> of March. The team could not collect data on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March because the car they were using developed a fault and had to be taken to Blantyre. This halted the data collection process for some days until when the car was repaired. As the team was waiting for the car to be repaired, they embarked on the transcribing and translating of the In-depth interviews (IDIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) that they conducted.

On the 31<sup>st</sup> of March the team comprising two Research Assistants and one clinical officer went back to Zomba to continue with the data collection and this was done on this day and on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April. After the two days of data collection, the team came back to Blantyre and continued with the transcribing and translating of the IDIs and FGDs.

After the two trips to Zomba for data collection, it was decided that the team should go to Mangochi to do the data collection for three days and then go back to Zomba to finish with the data collection there. It was scheduled that the team should leave for Mangochi on the 10<sup>th</sup> of April and collection data for three days. The team left on the 10<sup>th</sup> of March and will come back to Blantyre on the 14<sup>th</sup> of April. When the team from Mangochi comes back another team will go to Zomba on the 20<sup>th</sup> of April.

### **AHSI- TASKSHIFTING PROJECT**

There has been an ongoing supervision in Mulanje for the Taskshifting project. The District Eye Coordinator has been supervising the health workers in the Health centres and collecting data and teaching them on the four eye conditions: cataract, conjunctivitis, Presbyopia and Trauma and other eye conditions. The data that is collected is entered into the database for analysis.

### **PHALOMBE CHILDRENS EYE CARE PROJECT**

After successfully screening children in Phalombe last year, the Phalombe project which targeted children with visual difficulties in Phalombe was extended to Mulanje where the first screening was done on the 4<sup>th</sup> of February, 2011. The screening was organized by BICO in conjunction with the Lions Club of Limbe. The aim of the screening was to reach out to many children so that those that have visual problems and need glasses can benefit from the free glasses. The free glasses are given to such children by the Lions Club of Limbe.

On the day of the screening the team left Blantyre for Mulanje at around 8.00 in the morning. The screening was done at two places; Providence Girls Secondary school and Mulanje secondary school. The screening was done by two teams; one team did the screening at Providence Girls Secondary school and the other team did the screening at Mulanje Secondary school.

The team arrived at the first venue (Providence Girls Secondary school) at 8.52 in the morning and one team was dropped there. The other team proceeded to Mulanje Secondary school. The team at Providence went to the head mistress's office where the mistress told the team that a room has been arranged where the screening was to be conducted. The team was taken to the room and immediately began the registration and screening. The screening

started with children that came from other schools and then the children at Providence Girls secondary school were screened last.

At Providence Girls secondary school, two hundred and ninety (293) children were screened. Of the 293 children that were screened at Providence Girls Secondary school, nineteen (19) children were identified with visual problems and need glasses. These children will be provided with glasses. At Mulanje secondary school two hundred and seventeen (217) children were screened. Twenty (20) children were found with visual problems and need glasses.

In total, 510 children were screened in Mulanje on the 4<sup>th</sup> of February, 2011 and of the 510 children, 39 children were identified that require glasses. Of the 39 children, 23 are female and 16 are male. These children will be given the glasses for free by the Lions club of Limbe.

After the screening, the team that was at Providence Girls Secondary left Providence Girls secondary school at 3.10 pm to pick the other team at Mulanje Secondary school. The team got there at around 3.20 pm. The team left Mulanje for Blantyre at 16.20 pm and arrived in Blantyre at 5.24 pm.

The children that required glasses have been provided with glasses both in Phalombe and Mulanje. The glasses have been provided to the children by the Lions Club of Limbe in collaboration with the Lions Club of Perugia in Italy.

## **CHALLENGES**

Though so many activities have taken place, there have been several challenges that have caused some of the activities to delay and some even not to take place. One of the greatest challenges in the Global Base Knowledge has been communication to get the people that were linked to the children in the communities.

According to the Research Assistants they say that it has not been easy to actually get to children that were identified other by Key Informants or HSAs because most of the phone numbers that were being used at the time of identifying children had either changed or the KI or the HSA has been transferred to another catchment area. The Research Assistants did their best and the parents of the children were communicated and the project is going on well so far.