Primary School Vision Screening Involving Teachers in Nampula, Mozambique

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Primary school vision screening involving teachers in Nampula, Mozambique.

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Introduction
There is no plan for a national child eye care programme or existing human resource infrastructure to address the immediate challenge of child eye health in Mozambique. Furthermore, the prevalence and incidence of refractive error, visual impairment (VI) and child blindness (CB) in Mozambique is unknown. VI and CB have devastating personal, developmental, economic and social implications for the child, the family, the community and the nation. 2

Aim
To design, implement and evaluate a school based paediatric vision screening service, to identify those in need of eye care services, among Mozambique’s 11,561,000 children. 1

Materials and methods
Primary School Screening took place in three schools (urban, suburban and semi-rural) in Nampula, Mozambique in September 2010 and March 2011. Selection of children for screening was at random with a preference given to children with obvious eye abnormalities or children identified by teachers as having an eye problem or poor vision.

Children’s vision was screened by an optometry student, ophthalmic or teacher with LogMAR Illiterate E letter chart at 4 Meters. Other materials included a tape measure, black out sheets, record charts etc.

Results
770 children (408 male, 361 female, one sex not recorded, ranging from 5 – 18 years were screened in total. The mean (SD) age was 11.5 ± 7 years.

The ocular abnormality detection rate was 10.65%, comprising 7.40% of children who required spectacle provision, and 3.25%, who required referral to the Ophthalmology Unit.

Pathway of Referral

Conclusions
The prevalence of significant and uncorrected refractive error and other undiagnosed ocular abnormalities among the school-going population in Nampula, would support the concept of development of a low cost, school based vision and ocular health screening project.

Refractive Error was present among this population but none of the children observed wore spectacles Teachers appear to have an adequate level of education and interest to undertake vision screening in children. The ideal teacher profile for Vision Officers within schools is trainee teachers who can be taught the basics of vision screening and eye health through their existing studies.

Teachers are suitably placed in the community to become advocates for eye care and can encourage students to become aware of eye conditions among their peers and in the community. This study will inform a regional pilot teacher screening project for Nampula, which will include the addition of “Vision Screening” to teacher training modules at Universidade Pedagogica, Nampula, as part of a plan to develop a national child eye care programme for Mozambique.

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For further information
Please contact aoife.phelan@dit.ie. More information on this and related projects can be obtained at www.mozeyecare.org