

REPORT ON CATARACT OPERATIONS SPONSORED BY
CATARACTS ARE CURABLE THE GAMBIAN PROJECT (CAC)
AT SHEIKH ZAYED REGIONAL EYE CARE CENTRE (SZRECC)

A total of 20 operations were funded by CAC. Surgeries started in February, 2022. The first sets of 10 patients were treated in February and March 2022. The selection criteria were based mainly on extreme poverty, those who do not even have relatives who can pay for them. Perhaps this explains the reason for the delay in completing the 20 patients: I had to be personally involved in every patient's selection just to ensure that the objectives of the charity were met.

The beneficiaries are from different geographical locations in the Gambia but converge to have their cataract operations at SZRECC due to one reason or another. Some are referred to have cataract operation in SZRECC due to co-morbidities; for example: some that have diabetic retinopathies have their cataracts removed at the same time as anti-VEGF injection (AVASTIN) are given intra-vitreal. Those who have Glaucoma will undergo a combined procedure and those with traumatic complicated cataracts will also have their cataracts removed by an experienced consultant Ophthalmologist. Also, Children's cataracts surgeries are only done at SZRECC due to their complicated nature.

In this particular batch of 20 patients, a 6months old baby benefitted from surgery as the mother was extremely poor, the nurses in the ward called her to my attention to ask if I could include her in the package. I rushed to the ward immediately, upon seeing this woman and her child, I could not afford to leave her without intervention. She was hungry looking, dirty and emaciated and so was her child. When I questioned her, I realized that she came from a remote village in the North Bank Region close to the Senegalese boarder, and she had struggled to walk the long distance to reach SZRECC. She actually came as a referred case from Essau Eye unit. The mother's eyes had some congenital anomalies which had gone untreated. The child had congenital cataracts in both eyes and could not see. I asked the Hospital Administrator to waive the payments of B-scan which was approved. The allocation of our package per patient would not have been enough to cover this. The nurses in the ward and I liaised together to help her in the next hospital for a Paediatricians' review and some laboratory investigations. Surgery was carried out but unfortunately without success as the child had Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP) which was detected in the Operating Theatre after the cataracts were removed. This means the child is permanently blind in both eyes.

The 2nd interesting case was a refugee from Sierra Leone who has been in the Gambia more than a decade; her husband died during the civil war she moved to The Gambia with her daughter. The daughter later got married to a tailor who left her pregnant and travelled through the infamous 'Back-way' to Europe. This woman delivered in the absence of the husband and the baby was born with cancer in both eyes (Retinoblastoma). Shortly after delivery, the husband was deported from Germany and returned without a penny. He could not contain his frustration and accused the wife of being a

witch, divorced her and abandon her with the sick child. She came to our hospital in tears. While I engaged her for counselling concerning the child's condition and prognosis she told me her story. We had to refer her to Dakar (Senegal) for chemotherapy but she told me that she could not afford to go to Dakar as she has no support. She and her mother survive by petty trading which does not provide enough to for their food and rent. The child died a month later. This mother by the name of Mariatou Tunkara benefitted from your sponsored cataract surgery.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is without doubt that this initiative to sponsor cataract surgery at tertiary hospitals like the SZRECC has great merit. People from all over the country and beyond converge at this place for their eye health needs. Some of these are referred from elsewhere and do not have a choice but to come over. Sometimes they cannot find homes to lodge outside the hospital in case they are not admitted. It is always a challenge for me to apply the criteria for inclusion. I have to be strict and choose only those who do not have any relatives earn enough to pay the fees for them.

I strongly recommend this initiative to continues as the need continues to grow.

Many thanks

Alasana Touray-Implementing Surgeon.

7th June 2022

LIST OF NAMES OF 10 PEOPLE WHO BENEFITTED FROM FREE CATARACT SURGERY AT THE SZRECC; SPONSORED BY:

CATARACTSARECURABLE THE GAMBIAN PROJECT.

24th February to 17th March 2022

NAMES	AGE	SEX	ADDRESS	EYE OPERATED UPON
Babucarr Yaffa	65	M	New Yundum	Right Eye
Mariatou Tunkara	57	F	Manjai Kunda	Left Eye
Mamadou Khalifa Barry	76	M	Jalanbang	LE
Amie Dampha	66	F	Kaur	LE
Tumbul Fatty	65	F	Salikene	RE
Aram Nget	70	F	Tuba-Niamina	RE
Aramata Saine	70	F	Baria	RE
Abdoulie Baldeh	70	M	Dippa Kunda	RE
Jarai Kebbeh	86	M	Sutukoba	RE
Sunkary Jassey	66	F	Fajikunda	LE

**LIST OF 10 CATARACT PATIENTS WHO BENEFITTED FROM SPONSORSHIP BY
CATARACTARECURABLE, THE GAMBIA PROJECT**

April to May 2022. At the SZRECC.

Abbreviations: HM: can only see hand movement

CF: can count fingers close to face

Names of patients	Addresses	Age	Sex	Eye operated	Pre-op vision	Post-op vision
Alfusainey Kolley	Tanji village	90yrs	M	Left eye	HM	6/12
Haddy Jatta	Tallinding	22yrs	F	Right Eye	CF	6/36
Muhammed Khan	Fass Njaga Choi Village	75yrs	M	RE	HM	6/24
Demba Bah	Karantaba village	80yrs	M	LE	HM	6/60
Abdoulie Thorpe	Sanchaba	24yrs	M	RE	HM	6/12
Aramata Saine	Barra	63yrs	F	LE 2 nd eye	HM	6/36
Bonowall	Albreda Area	6mnths	M	Both Eyes Congenital cataracts	Believed not to be able to see	Could not determine
Aram Nget	Tuba Niamina CRR	70yrs	F	LE 2 nd eye	CF	6/60
Mamadou Khalifa Barry	Jabang Village	76yrs	M	RE	HM	6/24
Adama Touray	Jarra Badumeh LRR.	46yrs	M	LE	HM	6/18