

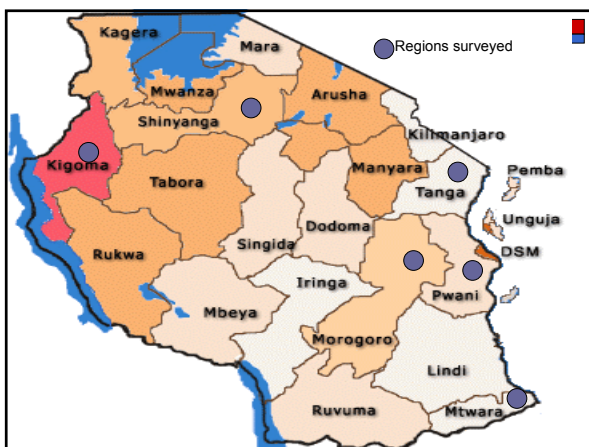
## Estimated burden of eye disease in leprosy patients in Africa: Newly diagnosed patients

Dr Hemed Kilima

KCMC Eye Department  
Kilimanjaro Centre for Community Ophthalmology  
Ministry of Health, Tanzania

## Background

- Approximately 11% of MB patients have potentially blinding pathology at time of leprosy diagnosis (LOSOL: Ethiopia, India, Philippines)
- Another 5-7% develop pathology (primarily uveitis) during MDT
- Cataract leading cause of blindness in leprosy patients globally
- Prevalence & incidence of potentially blinding pathology much lower in PB patients (about 5%)
- Study undertaken in Tanzania to assess burden of preventable & treatable eye disease to develop national strategy



## Study aims

- To determine the prevalence of ocular complications due to leprosy and unrelated to leprosy among patients on MDT.
- To determine the use of eye services among leprosy patients.

## Methodology

- Cross-sectional population-based study.
- Six districts (of 6 high endemic regions) in Tanzania.
- All leprosy patients on MDT in the randomly selected districts.
- Standardized ocular examination, disability examination, and interview on use of services.

## Findings (4 districts)

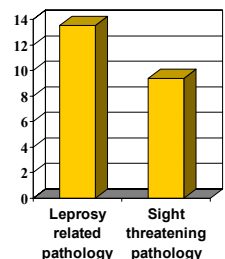
- 371 (72% of total population) examined & interviewed.
- Age 4-80 years (mean 41).
- 174 males and 143 females.
- Visual acuity
  - < 3/60 (blind: WHO) = 5 (1.6%)
  - < 6/60 (blind: disability score) = 14 (4.4%)

## Leprosy characteristics

- 227 (72%) were multibacillary patients.
- Current disability
  - 36% feet.
  - 23% hands

## Ocular features

- 108 eyes (50 people) had leprosy related pathology.
- 73 eyes (35 people) had sight threatening pathology.
- Age ( $p < 0.001$ ) and duration of leprosy ( $P = 0.001$ ) were associated with leprosy related pathology.



## Causes of visual loss (n=43)

- Cataract (37 patients)
  - 31 patients age related.
  - 6 patients complicated.
- Trichiasis (2).
- Corneal opacity (2).
- Others – refractive error, maculopathy (2)

## Use of services

### Utilization

- 58 (40%) used eye care services.
- Only 10% (1/11) of patients with cataract had operation.
- Patient perception of eye problems correlated well with findings of eye care provider (P=0.001)

### Barriers reported by patients

- Cost of service (30%),
- No need felt (15%)
- Lack of time (13%).

## CONCLUSION

- Visual impairment is common.
- Cataract is the main cause of loss of vision.
- There is poor utilization of eye care services with cost reported as the main barrier.
- Nationally 9.4% (=660 people) of 7000 newly recognized patients have potentially blinding pathology
- Findings reflect mix of both MB and PB; confirms findings in other settings (LOSOL)
- Older patients need priority

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Establish national policy and strategy (adopt international guidelines)
- Improve training of integrated health workers
- Establish clearly defined referral network
- Consider: Exemption/subsidy for leprosy patients for lag or cataract surgery?
- Integrate leprosy patients into regional VISION 2020 programmes