



"I am Sheilah Nangena, a 23 year old qualified optometrist from Kenya. I acquired my Bachelor Degree in Optometry and Vision Science from Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST). In total, I was one of 42 optometry graduates, nine of which were female.

Currently, I am part of the junior faculty as Clinical Instructor in the department of Optometry and Vision Science at MMUST, a position I am very excited about and never imagined I would attain, especially when I was a student.

My experience as a lecturer is great. I have always wanted to be in the field of academia. I am challenged every day and the need to increase my knowledge is inevitable – that is why I am currently taking my Masters in Optometry at MMUST and thereafter will pursue a Doctorate Degree.

Since qualifying, I have worked as an optometrist at various private eye care and optical practices, including; HiTech Opticians and Gurunanak Hospital. In addition I worked on part time in the optical units at Langata Hospital and Sunshine Medical Centre, in

Nairobi.

When I was working as an intern at Lion's Eye Hospital I developed a special interest in contact lens care and practice, myopia control and Keratoconus management. This one particular case influenced my interest towards contact lens practice. A 14 year old girl with keratoconus was misdiagnosed with myopia and given glasses for her blurry vision at an optical shop, and then was referred for keratoconus management at Lion's Eye Hospital when it was too late.

The cornea had thinned extremely, management with contact lens or crosslinking was not possible. Cornea transplant was done but the cornea was rejected so the graft needs to be redone but she cannot afford the surgery. All this could have been avoided if the right diagnosis was made at the initial stage of the condition. This experience deeply challenged me to further my studies to be able to offer proper training and create awareness about this blinding condition if not detected and managed early."

Kenya, like many countries in the developing world do not have optometry as an established profession. Eye care needs of the population are a burgeoning inequity, that cannot be serviced long term, without developing a workforce to address this gap in provision. Brien Holden Vision Institute works with local partners, government and universities to develop optometry as an emerging profession, investing funding from supporters like Optometry Giving Sight, to establish sustainable measures by building optometry schools and vision centres.

"My memorable moment during my course was when we received the donated equipment and international lecturers from Brien Holden Vision Institute. We all felt such gratefulness and this proved that optometry was real, and we now had equipment for practice. We were the first cohort enrolled at MMUST and for awhile we did not have enough lecturers and nowhere to practice. We were all very excited to witness the opening of the

Academic Vision Centre, which is critical for every optometry student's development of practical skill level. It was my first entry into working with real patients, under supervision, and the experience I gain there was so valuable to me once qualified.

Optometry being a new profession in Kenya is doing well. All we need is a proper legislation and recognition from the government to create professional guidelines and ensure that only trained Optometrist are licensed to practice. As for students optometrists I would encourage them to read widely always be motivated to do research and find role models. Optometry is the best profession and they should keep it at heart."