

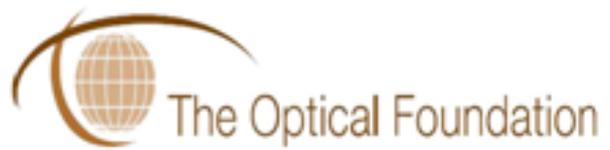
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The Optical  
Foundation

NEWSLETTER  
DECEMBER 2015



AKWAABA TO GHANA!  
WELCOME TO GHANA!



MAKING EYE CARE ACCESSIBLE IN GHANA  
THROUGH SCREENINGS, EDUCATION AND  
RESEARCH

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# TOF NEWS

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2015 has been a great year for The Optical Foundation!

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## New Board Members – The International Team

It all started off with the addition of three amazing women to our board: Dr. Rianne Harmsen, Charlotte Marbus and Dr. Maria Markoulli. Over the years each of these women have been involved with The Optical Foundation from time to time.

Rianne lived in Ghana from 2007 to 2008, where she volunteered as a science lecturer at the Nandom Secondary school in North Ghana. During this period she was able to observe our work in Cape Coast and is well familiar with our vision. She has been involved in fundraising activities and has shared her Ghana

expertise over the years. We were very excited when Rianne accepted our invitation to become a board member of The Optical Foundation.

Soon after Charlotte joined our board. With her background in sales and marketing we couldn't have asked for a better person focused on marketing, PR, policies, and fundraising.

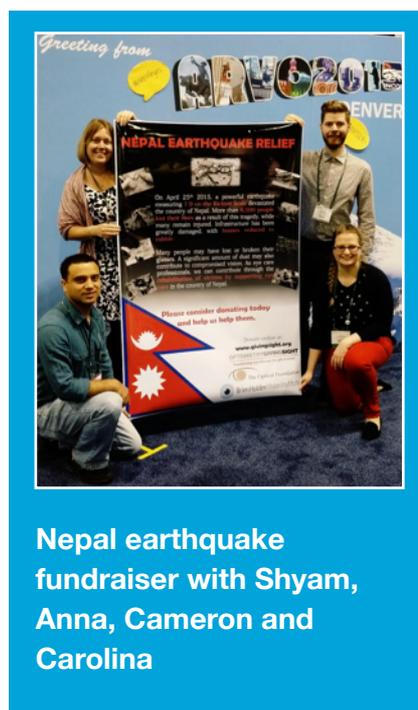
Maria became a board member with the focus on leading our research teams in Ghana. We are truly honoured to have her on our board as she brings with her extensive experience in research.

The Optical Foundation couldn't be more proud of its board members and it is very exciting that we can now truly call ourselves an international organisation with board members located all over the world!

## Nepal Earthquake Fundraiser

In April we initiated a fundraiser to support the people of Nepal after the earthquake.

Many people lost their lives, their family members, and their homes. To help rebuild the country, The Optical Foundation, Brien Holden Vision Institute and Optometry Giving Sight partnered together to support the Nepal Earthquake Relief through eye care. We raised more than a 1000 dollars for Nepal at the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology (ARVO) in Denver.



Nepal earthquake fundraiser with Shyam, Anna, Cameron and Carolina

## Video Competition

In May The Optical Foundation entered into a video competition to win the Campus Travel Grant. Unfortunately we didn't win, but we did produce an amazing video about our work in Ghana and our future plans. All our videos are produced by the LimeStone Group free of charge, a big thank you to LimeStone for their continuous support. Our video can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/OGRP00ilaGY>

## Ghana Lecturing Tour – Prof Eric Papas

One of the highlights of 2015 was the Lecturing Tour that The Optical Foundation organized. We invited Prof Eric Papas to present at two universities (University of Cape Coast and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology) and at the Ghanaian Optometric Association in Accra. His presentation included work published from the TFOS workshops: meibomian gland dysfunction and contact lens discomfort.

The lectures went on for approximately 2 hours and the students and optometrist listened with rapt attention. Students and optometrists came up with many questions afterwards and were very excited to

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**Collins:** *"Hi Carolina, Your love for what you do is admirable. Thank you for visiting Ghana and for the great presentation. Prof Papas presentation was great. He got me thinking a lot about how to improve eye research in Ghana. His phrase "watch this space" told me of the many gaps we have to fill in research. Keep the smile!"*

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**Prof Eric Papas, Dr Carolina Kunnen and Red Red**

meet Prof Eric Papas. There were optometrists that traveled 6 hours to attend Prof Eric Papas' presentation! It was a very successful and inspiring week.

A video impression of the lecturing tour can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/Si1okHOYkFw>

**Prof Eric Papas about his experience in Ghana:** *"You never quite know what to expect when you arrive in a new country, that you haven't visited before. One thing I have learned over my years of traveling though, is not to have pre-conceived ideas. It's much better to see what you find when you get there.*

*What I found in Ghana was amazing! Beautiful lakes, dramatic beaches, bustling markets, intense history and Red Red..... but most of all, truly fantastic people.*

*My trip lasted only for ten days but during that time, expertly guided by Carolina Kunnen from The Optical Foundation, I managed to visit Accra, Kumasi and Cape Coast. We travelled by bus, which gave a marvellous opportunity to see the country outside the busy streets of the major cities. The tour was a bit of a whirlwind but we packed in lectures to the students at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology and University of Cape Coast and the clinicians of the Association of Optometrists and also visited clinical sites at Jachie, Ayeduase and Korle Bu hospital to see how eye-care is delivered in the community. Everywhere we went the welcome was warm and friendly and I could not have been more impressed by the*

*enthusiasm, professionalism and thirst for knowledge among those we encountered. The commitment to patient care and service delivery that I saw demonstrated at every level, from students, through teachers to practicing clinicians, was fantastic and is making a real difference. A great example of this was the undergraduate student who approached us with plans for providing outreach vision screening in a remote rural area; a wonderful idea that has since been made to happen.*

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**Emmanuel:** *"I am glad you enjoyed your stay with us at KNUST. It was a pleasure to have you and Eric around. The lecture was great and the interactions we had was also insightful."*

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*Ghana presents a challenging environment for health care but it is compelling how much benefit comes from the hard work of the professionals in the area and their careful use of the scarce resources available to them. Hopefully our visit did a little bit to help.*

*Oh and Red Red...? That's a tomato, bean, palm oil, pepper stew served with fried plantains;delicious with a cold beer and worth going back for on its own."*

## Collaboration with the Dutch foundation Stichting Zienderogen Nederland

One of our most recent collaborations was initiated by one of our board members, Huub Villevoeye. Huub and his wife have always maintained a keen interest in Gambia after their first visit over 14 years ago. They became friends with a local police officer and his family in a little town called Serrekunda. The police officer's wife is a teacher at a primary school and Huub who has been a board member of The Optical foundation since 2006, had always envisaged The Optical foundation conducting eye screenings for the children in this town. As The Optical Foundation always wants to be supportive of our board members' initiatives, we went in search of an organisation already working on projects in Gambia. We found a Dutch foundation "Stichting Zienderogen Nederland" which not only has extensive experience in short screening projects, but also has a large network of volunteers they can tap into. A combination of volunteers from Stichting Zienderogen and The Optical Foundation will travel to Gambia mid-2016 and will screen approximately 2016 children (4-17 yrs of age) and 84 teachers in a time span of only 2 weeks. We are very excited about this collaboration.

### Essiam Screening

Early December, The Optical Foundation and the University of Cape Coast (UCC) teamed up for another collaborative screening project in Essiam. Organized by Francis Wiredu one of UCC's students, this two day screening gave 11 optometry students the opportunity to conduct eye tests on 301 children (4 – 17 years of age), under supervision from a clinical lecturer from UCC. Fortunately most children had healthy eyes. However, thanks to the screenings we were able to we provided 25 children with corrective glasses and 31 children with allergic conjunctivitis/glaucoma suspects/lens opacities were either treated or referred to the UCC eye clinic. All these conditions would have gone untreated if these screenings hadn't taken place.



Essiam Screening

**THE OPTICAL FOUNDATION WISHES  
EVERYONE A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A  
HAPPY 2016!**