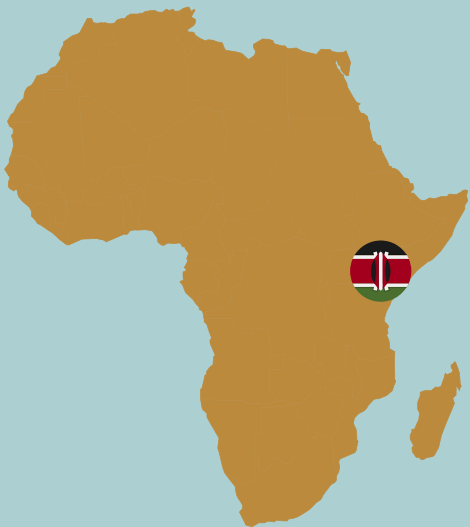




in partnership with



VOSH in AFRICA

Strategic Meeting

June 2 – 3, 2026

Nairobi – Kenya



African VOSH and SVOSH Chapters meet in Nairobi

In recent years, VOSH and SVOSH chapters across Africa have shown remarkable growth and dynamism. Today, 20 African SVOSH and VOSH chapters represent 18 optometry departments or schools and two VOSH chapters across 10 countries.

Their enthusiasm and commitment to the VOSH mission have generated a wide range of academic, outreach, awareness-raising and networking activities. VOSH/International has played an increasingly important role in supporting this momentum through academic collaboration, student engagement, humanitarian service delivery, research and policy-relevant initiatives aligned with global frameworks such as WHO SPECS 2030. This process also aligns with VOSH/International’s 2026 Strategic Plan, which focuses on strengthening optometric education, increasing awareness of optometry and eye health, and supporting the integration of optometry into health systems.

In partnership with National Vision Inc. and The Coalition for Clear Vision (TCCV), the **VOSH in Africa 2026 Strategic Meeting** was held at Lions SightFirst Eye Hospital in Nairobi, Kenya, on 2–3 June. The high-level meeting was designed to explore ways to strengthen optometric education and discuss optometry’s contribution to sustainable primary eye health care systems across Africa.



Upon arrival at the Lions SightFirst Eye Hospital, delegates adhered to a clinical protocol and proceeded to register.

Delegates arrive and get ready for the meeting

It also created a valuable opportunity to collaborate with Keralink International, which included the VOSH delegation in its infective keratitis workshop alongside Kenyan ophthalmologists. This provided a tangible demonstration of the complementary roles of optometry and ophthalmology in delivering comprehensive patient care. After the meeting, several additional topics were also identified that could further enhance interprofessional learning and practice.

Dr Vivian Ongore, representing the Kenyan Ministry of Health Eye Health Section, opened the meeting by highlighting Kenya’s important role in advancing eye care. Fifty-two participants from 14 countries attended, including SVOSH faculty advisers, VOSH chapter leaders, and Kenyan and international representatives from industry, non-profit organisations and US academic institutions. Dr Vicki Weiss, President of VOSH/International, and Jacqueline Grove, President of the NVI 20/20 Foundation and CEO of The Coalition for Clear Vision, welcomed attendees and wished them fruitful discussions. Dr Manilal Dodhia, Chairman of Lions SightFirst Eye Hospital, warmly welcomed delegates to Kenya and reaffirmed his commitment to providing affordable, comprehensive eye care.



Dr Vivian Ongore, representing the Ministry of Health in Kenya, officially inaugurated the meeting.



Vicki Weiss, President of VOSH/International, and Jacqueline Grove, President of the National Vision 20/20 Foundation and CEO of The Coalition for Clear Vision, extended a warm welcome to the attendees.



Dr. Manilal Dodhia, Chairman Lions Sight First Eye Hospital and his wonderful team

Participants heard from Victor Opiyo, President of the Optometrists Association of Kenya, on the evolution of optometry in Kenya, and from Sheila Nangena, faculty adviser of the SVOSH chapter at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST), on the development of optometric education in the country. This introductory session was complemented by a presentation from Jacqueline Grove, CEO of The Coalition for Clear Vision, who outlined TCCV’s work in Kenya, emphasised the role of the private sector in helping achieve the WHO target of a 40% increase in effective refractive error coverage, and encouraged attendees to consider what an optometry-led coalition could look like.



Dr Nsubuga, Makerere University, a great moderator



Victor Opiyo, President, Optometrists Association of Kenya



Sheila Nangena, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology



Shivang Dave, Plenoptika



The discussions and exchanges that followed enriched the working group deliberations. The working groups, including one dedicated to partners, were tasked with developing actionable suggestions based on their discussions. This process helped identify shared challenges and practical recommendations related to measuring clinical learning, the role of academic institutions in promoting optometry’s recognition and regulation, quality assurance in optometry programmes, and technologies suitable for low-resource settings. Partners also contributed specific suggestions on strengthening optometric education, promoting evidence of optometry’s impact, and connecting these efforts with global processes and directives.



Engaged group discussions.

Building on the discussion of technology and evidence, Shivang Dave, CEO of PlenOptika, highlighted how innovation can be harnessed while maintaining the quality and rigour needed to generate research that can influence change. This aligned closely with VOSH/International's efforts to strengthen research capacity among SVOSH chapters.

Day 1 closed with an engaging panel featuring faculty members and heads of department from the University of Cape Coast, Ghana; Makerere University, Uganda; University of Benin, Nigeria; Mzuzu University, Malawi; and Gondar University, Ethiopia, together with a special guest, the President of the New England College of Optometry in the United States. Under the able moderation of Prof Rasengane, panellists shared their views on the current state of optometric education in their countries and on strategies to strengthen the expertise already present across the region. The US perspective offered useful parallels, highlighting common challenges in the development of optometry and recommendations for ensuring continued progress.



Day 1 concluded with a highly engaging panel discussion that included representatives from Uganda, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Malawi, Ghana, and the United States.

The first day concluded with significant ideas and recommendations that encouraged continued reflection on VOSH's role in enabling the sustainable growth of a qualified optometric workforce.



On the morning of the second day, VOSH delegates participated in the Infective Keratitis Workshop organised by Keralink International and delivered by Dr. Shroff's Charity Eye Hospital of India. It was the first time VOSH/International had joined local ophthalmologists in a shared clinical learning experience.

KERALINK



Participation in the Infective Keratitis Workshop.

When participants reconvened in the afternoon, Optoglobe, the global optometry student community, shared preliminary findings on students' limited access to basic optometric equipment. The presentation grounded the discussion in the realities faced by the continent's future optometric workforce and highlighted the direct implications for patient care and for optometry's position within health systems.



Pemijeh Gadimoh, the Founder of Optoglobe, addressing the audience.

This led to a rich discussion on the importance of harmonising optometric education across Africa. Participants noted that optometry education institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa have expanded significantly over the past two decades. While acknowledging the challenges of pursuing such an ambitious goal, they also recognised the potential benefits of harmonisation for improving access to eye care. Attendees from the United States shared perspectives on how US optometric education and practice are organised, regulated and continually evolving across states.

Throughout the two days, the desire to work together was clear. Participants agreed that a realistic and manageable starting point should involve all African SVOSH and VOSH chapters. Further discussions on how this emerging working coalition can maximise its



Prof. Tuwani Rasengane leading the discussion on the harmonisation of optometric education in Africa

potential will take place in the coming months, with a report expected at the 2026 Annual Meeting on 3 October.

Because discussions were so substantive, the planned session on the clinics protocol was postponed and will take place online in the coming months.

Jeff Soulliere, Keralink Director of Strategic Partnerships and Initiatives, also offered remarks on collaboration and on current initiatives that could benefit African VOSH and SVOSH chapters.

Dr Vicki Weiss, President of VOSH/International, closed the meeting by thanking attendees for sharing their experiences and views so openly, and for their commitment to strengthening the profession and optometric education.

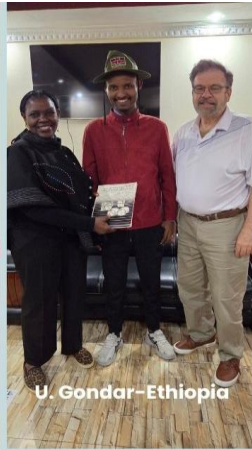
As a gesture of appreciation, a dinner was organised for all VOSH and Keralink attendees, bringing the meeting to a collegial close. VOSH/International distributed 70 books to all attending VOSH and SVOSH chapters, generously donated by Dr Shezad Naroo of Aston University in the United Kingdom.

Overall, the meeting marked an important step towards strengthening collaboration among African VOSH and SVOSH chapters, VOSH/International, and its partners. By bringing together educators, students, professional leaders, industry representatives and eye health organisations, it created a shared space to reflect on current progress, identify common challenges and shape practical priorities for the future. The discussions reinforced the value of collective action in advancing optometric education, supporting professional recognition and contributing to more sustainable and accessible eye care systems across Africa.

For more information, contact Maria Arce, Executive Director, VOSH/International at vosh@vosh.org



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PANEL 2030 AND BEYOND: CHARTING OPTOMETRIC EDUCATION



MODERATOR



Prof. Tuwani Rasengane

Head of Department
University of the Free State, South Africa



Tuesday, 2 June, 2026



16.00 - 17.00 PM NAIROBI

THE PANELISTS



Merkineh Lorato

Head, Department of Optometry
Gondar University, Ethiopia



Samuel Abokyi, OD

Senior Lecturer, School of Optometry
University of Cape Coast, Ghana



Chikasirimobi Timothy, OD

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Makerere University, Uganda



Howard Purcell, OD

President
New England College of Optometry
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With gratitude to:



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Infective Keratitis Workshop Partner



Prof. Shezad Naroo

