

## **Dr. Helena Ndume (Namibia)**



Dr. Helena Ndume is an ophthalmologist whose life's work has been the treatment of blindness and eye-related illnesses, both in Namibia and throughout the developing world.

Born in Namibia, she lived in exile in Zambia, Gambia and Angola before studying medicine in Germany at the University of Leipzig, where she received her PhD in 1989. Upon completing her medical internship at Katutura Hospital and Windhoek Central Hospital in Namibia, she returned to Germany to specialize in ophthalmology at the University of Saarland. She spent part of her field studies in Tamil Nadu, India, where she participated in outreach services in eye care for the first time.

Dr. Ndume's husband, Dr. Solomon Guramatunhu, also an eye specialist, has been instrumental in introducing her to surgical eye expeditions. While attending a medical conference in the United States in 1995, she visited the booth of the U.S. Surgical Eye Expeditions (SEE). There she joined the organization's roster of over 600 volunteer eye surgeons and soon started to organize ophthalmological treatment camps throughout Namibia. As a result, a number of international groups like SEE, Seeing Without Borders, and individual physicians have travelled to Namibia every year, dedicating their time and employing their expertise in the service of caring for the eyes of the underprivileged. The success of her eye camps in Namibia led Dr. Ndume to expand her project to neighbouring Angola.

To date, Dr. Ndume has helped over 30,000 Namibians receive no-cost eye surgery and intraocular lens implants addressing blindness, cataracts, and myopia. She currently serves as Head of Ophthalmology at the Windhoek Central Hospital and has received numerous international honours, including:

- Grand Commander of the Order of Namibia First Class;
- Red Cross International Humanitarian Service Award (2009);
- Rotary International Humanitarian Award in the fight against blindness (2008);
- Namibia National Science Award (2005);
- Humanitarian award in the prevention of blindness in Santa Barbara, California, USA (2001);
- Lions International Award in recognition of sincere and devoted efforts with Lions Operation Brightsight Project (1999).