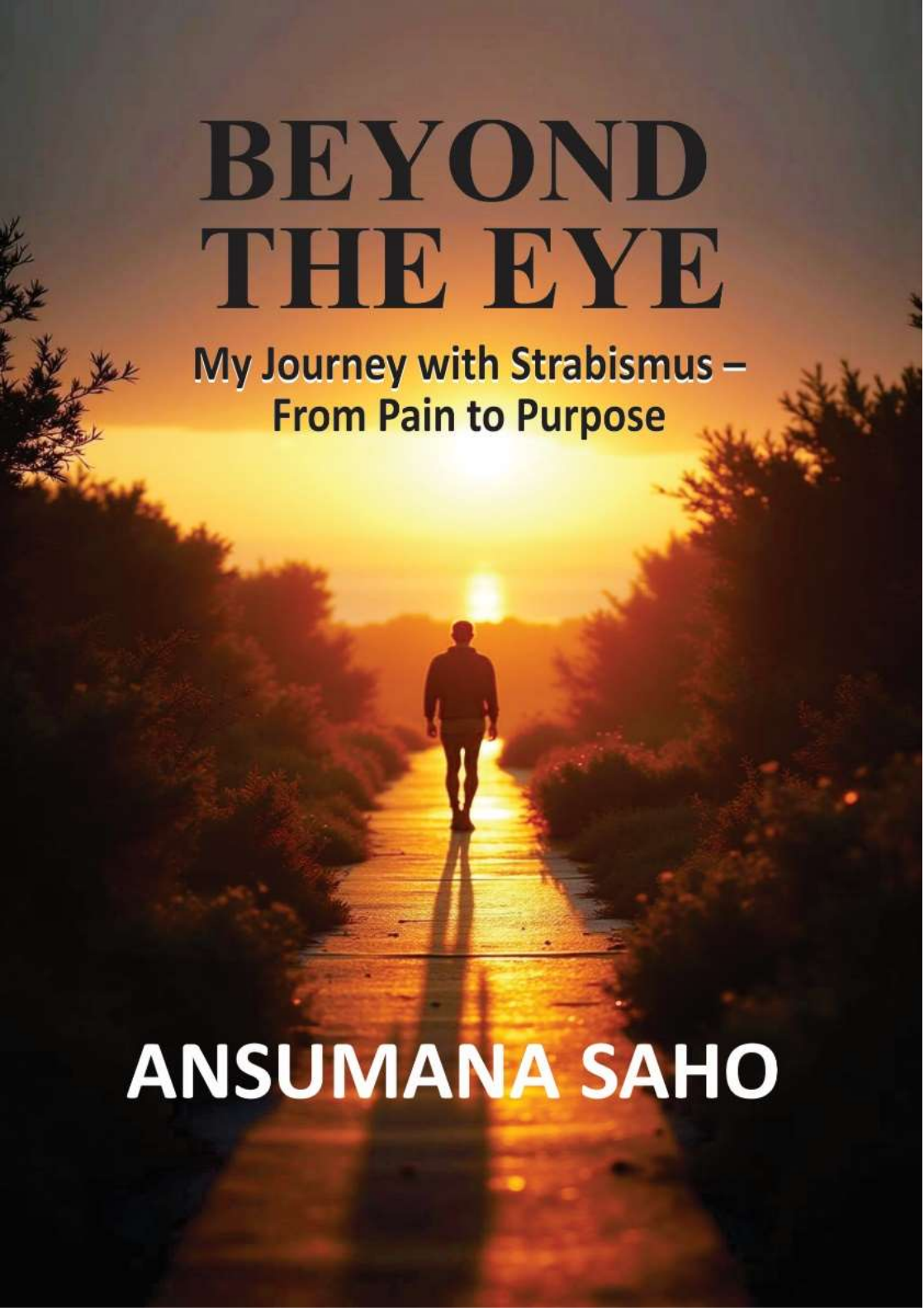

BEYOND
THE EYE
My Journey with Strabismus –
From Pain to Purpose
ANSUMANA SAHO

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to every child, young person, and adult living with strabismus or any visible defect that may lead to rejection of the person as a result of their appearance. Human beings, whatever their appearance or defects, deserve respect and consideration, as it is only through such that human values could be sustained.

To those living with strabismus, I want you to know that I feel your pain; I have lived and understood the full harshness of coping with that condition. I know the silent tears, the questions, the embarrassment, the loss of confidence, and the longing simply to be accepted. But I also know that your condition does not define your values. Your eyes may be different, but your dreams, your abilities, and your purpose are just as great as everyone else's.

It wouldn't make sense if I failed to recognize the effort of parents and caregivers. Your love, encouragement and belief in your children can give them the confidence to overcome challenges and achieve their full potentials.

My family members deserve commendation for the support and understanding they have shown me through the years. To friends, teachers, colleagues and everyone who stood by me when life got difficult, I say thank you for your words of support and time. Your kindness gave me the strength to keep moving forward.

Finally, I dedicate this book to the future members of the Gambia Strabismus Support Association. This work, I am sure, will continue to remind you that you are not alone in this struggle. Together, we can raise awareness, fight stigma, promote early treatment, support families, and build a world where no one will be judged because of the alignment of their eyes. May this book become a voice for the unheard and hope for the discouraged.

FOREWORD

Stephen P. Christiansen, MD, Pediatric Ophthalmologist, Boston University, Chair, International Pediatric Eyecare Training (IPET), a committee of the International Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus Consortium (IPOSC)

Strabismus, also known as misaligned eyes, is a condition that touches far more than the eyes. It affects the confidence of the child, the expectations of the parent and the everyday functionality of the family. As pediatric ophthalmologists, we witness this truth every day. We see the quiet hesitation in a child's gaze, the worry in a mother's voice, and the uncertainty in a father's questions. And beyond all else, we see something – something more powerful than words. We see resilience and courage and transformation.

In *Beyond the Eyes: My Journey with Strabismus – From Pain to Purpose*, Ansumana offers a story that every clinician hopes their patients will one day discover: that treatment is possible, that confidence can be rebuilt, and that no child or adult living with strabismus is ever defined by the alignment of their eyes. His words echo the lived experiences of countless families we serve, and they illuminate the emotional landscape that medical charts cannot capture.

Early in the book, Saho vividly recounts the moment he first learned his eye condition could be corrected. “Your squint can be corrected,” he was told. For many patients, this simple sentence becomes the beginning of a new chapter – one filled with hope, relief and possibility. As clinicians, we know the profound impact that timely diagnosis, compassionate care, and accessible treatment can have. But Saho reminds us that the journey is not only medical; it is deeply human.

His story is a testament to why our work matters. It affirms the importance of expanding pediatric eye care services, strengthening surgical programmes, and ensuring that no child is left untreated because of geography, stigma or lack of awareness. It also highlights the extraordinary value of collaboration, between families, clinicians, orthoptists, nurses and international partners, who together make healing possible.

What makes this book exceptional is not only the personal transformation it describes, but the purpose it ignites. Saho’s commitment to advocacy, education, and the creation of the Gambia Strabismus Support Association reflects the very heart of pediatric ophthalmology: restoring sight, restoring confidence, and restoring hope.

To every parent who has ever worried about a child’s future, to every young person who has felt judged by their appearance, and to every clinician striving to deliver compassionate care, this book is a reminder that healing extends beyond the operating room. It happens in

homes, in classrooms, in communities, and within the human spirit.

Ansumana's journey affirms what we, as pediatric ophthalmologists, deeply believe: Strabismus is treatable. Every child deserves early care. And every person deserves to be seen – not just with the eyes, but with understanding and compassion.
This book is more than a memoir. It is a beacon of hope, a call to action, and a celebration of the strength found in every patient who walks through our clinic doors. It is an honour introducing this inspiring work.

PREFACE

Every person has a story. Some stories are filled with joy, while others are marked by challenges that shape who we become.

My Lived Experiences with Strabismus

I was born with strabismus, commonly known as squint. For many years, I believed it was simply something I had to live with. As a child growing up in Somita, a village in the West Coast Region of The Gambia, I did not understand why my eyes looked different from those of other children. Neither did my family fully understand that the condition could be treated.

As I grew older, I experienced ridicule, bullying, and moments of self-doubt that affected my confidence in school and in public life. Although I worked hard academically and achieved many successes, I often struggled with the fear of being judged because of my appearance.

Everything changed when I discovered that my condition could be treated. After many years of living with strabismus, I underwent corrective surgery. The operation transformed not only the alignment of my eyes but also my confidence, my outlook on life, and my sense of purpose.

This book is not written to seek sympathy. It is written to offer hope. It is for every child who has been laughed at because they look different. It is for every parent who worries about a child with strabismus and does not know

where to seek help. It is for teachers, healthcare professionals, and community leaders who can make a positive difference in the lives of children.

Most importantly, it is for every person living with strabismus. I want you to know that you are not alone. Your condition does not define your worth, your intelligence, your future, or your ability to achieve your dreams.

My journey taught me that hope can be found even after years of uncertainty. It taught me that confidence can be rebuilt and that one person's experience can become a source of encouragement for many others.

This book is the story of that journey – from pain to purpose. I pray that as you read these pages, you find courage, understanding, and inspiration to face life's challenges with confidence and determination.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book is dedicated to individuals living with strabismus and to the professionals who work tirelessly to restore not only vision but also confidence, dignity and hope. I extend my sincere gratitude to the International Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus Consortium (IPOSC) for its pivotal role in expanding access to strabismus surgery in The Gambia. Through its commitment to advancing pediatric eye care and strabismus services across Africa, IPOSC has had a profound and lasting impact on my life.

I also wish to acknowledge the Sheikh Zayed Regional Eye Care Centre (SZRECC), International Pediatric Eyecare Training (IPET) for its invaluable contributions to strengthening eye care services in The Gambia. In collaboration with IPOSC, IPET has supported the training and development of Gambian eye care professionals, fostered local expertise and improved access to high-quality pediatric eye care and strabismus treatment. Their dedication to education and capacity building continues to create a meaningful and lasting impact.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to Dr. Bothun and his entire surgical team for the successful outcome of my strabismus correction surgery. Your exceptional expertise, professionalism, compassion and dedication have made a meaningful difference in both my appearance and overall

confidence. Thank you for the high standard of care. I pray that God continue to protect your hands, bless you with wisdom and strength, and enable you perform many more successful surgeries. I hope that when you go through these pages, you will see the lasting impact your hands have made on my life and the lives of many others. Please extend my appreciation to each member of your team for the positive difference you have made.

I am especially grateful to Mr. Sutay Jobe for his encouragement, guidance and compassionate care. His support gave me hope during a critical time, and it strengthened my confidence in the belief that a brighter future is possible.

I would also like to thank Mr. Dodou Jagne and Ms. Odeile Mendy, the orthoptists who cared for me during my surgery. Their professionalism, kindness and reassurance enabled me to approach this significant moment with confidence.

Heartfelt appreciation goes to Mr. Stephen P. Christiansen, MD Pediatric Ophthalmologist, Boston University; Chair, International Pediatric Eyecare Training (IPET), a committee of the International Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus Consortium (IPOSC).

Thanks go to Ms. Cindy Prichard, the vice chairman of International Pediatric Eye Care Training (IPET), for her encouragement, kindness, and belief in this project. After reviewing my manuscript, she remarked that my story was deeply moving and could serve as an effective tool

for raising awareness about strabismus. Her willingness to share my work with colleagues at IPOSC, together with her encouragement and confidence in the book's potential to inspire others, has been a tremendous source of motivation. I am deeply honoured by her support and grateful for her continued commitment to improving access to pediatric eye care and strabismus services across Africa.

Finally, I thank my family members, friends and colleagues for their unwavering support throughout my journey. Above all, I give thanks to Almighty God for His grace, strength, and guidance.

It is without doubt that this book will continue to serve as an inspiration to many people affected the same way as the author. And to those working hard to improve access to strabismus care, I assure you that your efforts shall never go in vain. Although individuals living with strabismus now believe in the possibility of getting treatment, your absence in that domain makes the whole provision impossible.

INTRODUCTION
What Is Strabismus?

Strabismus, commonly known as crossed eyes or eye misalignment, is a condition in which the two eyes do not point in the same direction at the same time. While one eye looks straight ahead, the other may turn inward, outward, upward or downward. The condition may be present all the time or occur only occasionally.

Strabismus affects people of all ages and can develop during infancy, childhood, or adulthood. It may result from problems with the eye muscles, the nerves that control those muscles, or the brain's ability to coordinate eye movements. In some cases, it is associated with other medical conditions, while in others the exact cause remains unknown.

Beyond its physical effects, strabismus can have a profound impact on a person's life. Some individuals experience double vision, reduced depth perception, eye strain, headaches, or decreased vision in one eye if treatment is delayed. However, the emotional and social effects are often even more significant. Many children are teased or bullied because of their appearance, while some adults face discrimination, low self-esteem, difficulties in relationships, and barriers to employment. The good news is that strabismus is treatable. Depending on its cause and severity, treatment may include

prescription glasses, prism lenses, treatment for amblyopia (lazy eye), vision therapy in selected cases, injections for certain conditions, or surgery to improve the alignment of the eyes. Early diagnosis and treatment offer the best chance of achieving healthy visual development in children, but adults can also benefit greatly from treatment, both functionally and cosmetically.

Despite these advances, many people, especially those living in developing countries, continue to live with untreated strabismus because of limited awareness, financial constraints, or misconceptions surrounding the condition. As a result, they endure unnecessary physical, emotional, and social challenges.

This book was written to increase awareness, replace myths with facts, encourage timely treatment and, above all, remind every person living with strabismus that they are far more than their condition.

Through my personal journey and the experiences shared in these pages, I hope to inspire understanding, compassion, and hope for everyone affected by strabismus. Because when society learns to look beyond the eyes, it begins to see the true beauty, strength and potential within every human being.

CHAPTER ONE

A Child Born Different

I was born and bred in Somita, a strictly farming village in the West Coast Region of The Gambia. Like every child, I entered this world full of promise, with a future that no one could predict. My parents welcomed me with love, and I grew up surrounded by family and the simple joys of village life. From birth, however, there was one thing that made me different. I was born with strabismus, commonly known as squint. One of my eyes did not align in the same direction as the other. At that time, very little was known in my community about the condition. My mother believed it was simply a normal eye problem that would correct itself as I grew older. Like many parents, she hoped that time would heal it.

As a young child, I did not know that I looked different from other children. I laughed, played, and dreamed like everyone else. I ran through the village with my friends, enjoying the freedom and innocence of childhood. I had no reason to think there was anything unusual about me. My eyes remained exactly the same as one year ended and another began. Although my family cared deeply for me, they did not know that strabismus could often be treated. Access to specialized eye care was limited, and information about the condition was not widely available. We simply accepted it as part of my life. Looking back today, I do not blame my parents. They acted according to the knowledge they had at the time.

They loved me and wanted the best for me. If they had known that treatment was available, I have no doubt they would have done everything possible to help me.
My story reflects the experience of many families. Parents often delay seeking treatment because they believe a child's eyes will straighten naturally with age, or because they are unaware that effective treatment may be available. This is one of the reasons I later became passionate about raising awareness. No parent should lose the opportunity to seek timely advice simply because they lack information.

Although I did not yet understand the challenges ahead, my life was about to change. The day I entered primary school would become one of the most important turning points in my childhood. It was there that I first discovered that the world could sometimes judge people by how they looked, rather than by who they were. I did not know it then, but the experiences that awaited me would test my confidence, shape my character, and eventually inspire a mission that would reach far beyond my own life.

Today, as I reflect on those early years, I see not only the struggles but also the lessons they taught me. Being born with strabismus was not the end of my story. It was the beginning of a journey that would teach me resilience, strengthen my faith, and ultimately lead me to dedicate my life to helping others living with the same condition. If there is one lesson I have learned from my childhood, it is this:

Being different does not make a person less valuable. Every child deserves love, acceptance, opportunity, and hope. Sometimes our greatest challenges become the very foundation of our greatest purpose.

CHAPTER TWO
My First Day at School

I was ten years old when my father took me to Somita Primary School to begin my education. Like every young child, I was excited. I had dreamed of going to school, wearing my uniform, carrying my books, and making new friends. I believed it would be one of the happiest days of my life.

That morning, my father walked beside me with pride. As we made our way to school, he took time to encourage me to study hard, respect my teachers, and make the most out of the opportunity given me. I listened carefully, not knowing that before the end of the school day, my excitement would be replaced with sadness.

Everything felt strange as I entered the classroom that morning. I took a look at my classmates, wondering whom among them would eventually become my friends. For a brief moment, I forgot that my eyes were different. Then the unexpected and hurtful thing happened. One of the boys who had been strangely observing me uttered, in a rather provocative tone, “crossed-eyed boy”, referring to my eye condition. The words echoed through the classroom. Some children laughed, while others turned to look at me. In that instant, I felt as though the whole room was staring at me. My joy disappeared. I felt like disappearing.

Until that moment, I had never thought of myself as different. I had always been simply Ansu, shortened for Ansumana, the name given to me at birth. But in a matter of seconds, I became “the boy with the squint eyes”. The rest of the school day felt endless. Although my body remained in the classroom, my mind was somewhere else. I found it difficult to concentrate on my lessons because my heart was heavy. I wondered why I was being laughed at for something I had never chosen.

So when finally school ended, I walked home quietly. I could no longer hide my feelings from my father who had been expecting to receive news from me regarding how my first day in school turned out. Telling him everything that had happened to me on that day, I told him straight to his face that he should not have sent me to school. “The children are laughing at me because of my eyes,” I told him. “I don’t want to go to school again.”

Looking back today, I realize that my father stood at an important crossroads. He could have allowed fear to guide my future, or he could have given me the courage to continue. He chose courage instead. Looking at me with eyes that indicate concern and care for my personal wellbeing, my father uttered words that resonate with me to this day. “Son, you are intelligent, and your facial appearance is one to behold. Do not allow what people say about your facial appearance stop you from getting on with school. Go to school and focus on your education. If anyone bullies you, report them to your teacher. And if they laugh at your eye condition, simply

tell them that God created you that way, and you are proud of your look."

Those words became a turning point in my life. They did not immediately stop the bullying, but they gave me something stronger than fear and shame I had initially felt. Confidence significantly grew in me.

Whenever someone mocked me, I remembered my father's words. Whenever I began to doubt myself, I remembered his belief in me. His encouragement became the shield that protected my self-worth throughout my school years. There were still difficult days ahead. There were moments when the hurt returned and times when I questioned myself. But I never forgot what my father had taught me: my value did not depend on other people's opinions.

Today, I often think about children who are experiencing what I experienced. Many of them return home carrying silent pain. Some are fortunate enough to have someone who encourages them, while others face their struggles alone. That is one of the reasons I founded the Gambia Strabismus Support Association.

Every child deserves someone who believes in them. Every parent deserves access to information and support. Every teacher should help create a classroom where no child is ridiculed because of a medical condition. The little boy who cried after his first day at school could never have imagined that one day he would dedicate his life to helping children who face the same

challenge. My father's words did more than comfort me that day. They helped shape the man I would become.

CHAPTER THREE
Finding Strength in Education

There is a saying that education is the key to success. For me, education became much more than that; it became my refuge. Although the bullying did not disappear after my first day at school, something inside me had changed. My father's words had taken root in my heart. Whenever I was down and out, I remembered his voice reminding me that I was intelligent, that I was handsome, and that I should never allow other people's opinion determine my future. Those words became my daily motivation.

Even as a young boy, I made a decision. If people looked at my eyes before they looked at my abilities, I would work so hard that they would have no other option than to recognize my potential. Every morning, I walked to school determined to learn. I listened carefully to my teachers, completed my assignments, and spent extra time reading my books and preparing for lessons. Gradually, my performance in class began to improve. Before long, my name regularly appeared among the best-performing pupils in the class.

Something remarkable happened. The children who had once laughed at me slowly began to respect me. My classmates started asking me to help them with their schoolwork. Some of the very people who had judged me because of my facial appearance now admired me because of my academic performance. For the first time

in my life, I realized that excellence has a way of changing people's perceptions. The bullying did not disappear completely, but it no longer had the same power over me.

Every good examination result strengthened my confidence. Every encouraging comment from a teacher reminded me that I was capable of achieving something meaningful. Education became my solace.

As I progressed to secondary school, I became more confident in regard to the abilities I possessed. I learned that while I could not immediately change the way my eyes looked, I could shape the kind of person I would become. I wanted to be known not for my condition but for my character, my determination, and my willingness to work hard.

Looking back today, I understand that those years taught me one of life's greatest lessons. People may first notice your appearance, but it is your character, your integrity, and your actions that define who you truly are. To every young person who feels different, I want to say this: *Never allow anyone convince you that your dreams are too small because of your appearance. Work hard. Respect others. Believe in yourself. Education has the power to open doors that prejudice tries to keep closed*.
While I continued with my education and the challenges that came along with it, I desperately yearn for high school. I believed that the future held greater opportunities. I did not know then that another difficult test awaited me – one that would challenge my

confidence in a way I had never imagined. That challenge would begin when I entered high schools.

CHAPTER FOUR
The City, the Stage, and the Battle Within

By the end of my secondary education, I had learned to believe in myself. My hard work had paid off, and I was determined to continue my education. When I sat for the entrance examination to senior secondary school, I prayed for an opportunity that would change my future. That opportunity came when I was admitted to one of the most respected high schools in The Gambia. Receiving that admission letter filled me with pride. It was proof that determination and hard work could open doors. My family celebrated with me, and I felt that a new chapter of my life was about to begin.

However, leaving my village for the city was not easy. For the first time, I was far away from the people who had always encouraged me, especially my father. His reassuring words had been my greatest source of strength throughout my childhood. Now I had to face new challenges without hearing his voice every day. During my first days at high school, I noticed everything was different. The classrooms were larger, and the students came from many parts of the country. I was nervous, but I was hopeful, too.

Unlike my first day in primary school, no one immediately laughed at me. I began to think that perhaps things would be different this time. For a while, they were. I made friends, concentrated on my studies, and continued to perform well academically. But the same disturbing comments about my eye condition soon returned, and I heard and resented them with the whole of my being. Some students mocked my eyes, and on a few occasions, even adults made jokes that left me feeling embarrassed. Although I smiled on the outside, the old wounds had not completely healed.

The greatest test came in 2003. During the second term, my classmates selected me to represent our class in the inter-class debate. When they announced my name, I immediately refused. It was not because I doubted my knowledge. I loved reading, and I knew I could prepare a good speech. My fear was standing in front of a large audience. I imagined people staring at my eyes instead of listening to my words. My English teacher believed in me more than I believed in myself. He encouraged me repeatedly, telling me that I was capable and that I should not allow fear stop me. Out of respect for him and my classmates, I finally agreed to participate.

I spent days preparing my speech. I practiced every sentence until I knew it by heart. Still, as the day approached, my anxiety grew stronger. When my name was called, my heart began to race. I walked slowly towards the podium, my hands trembled, my feet felt unusually heavy. I could hear my heartbeat louder than

the voices around me. As I stood before the audience, I took a heavy sigh and began to read my speech.

Everything went well at first. My classmates applauded, and some smiled encouragingly. Their support gave me confidence, and I started to believe that I could finish my presentation successfully. Then, from somewhere in the audience, I heard a voice. “Look... the squint-eyed boy… the funny eye”. The words struck me like lightning. Instantly, every fear I had carried since childhood returned. My mouth became dry, my legs trembled, my voice weakened. I struggled to continue reading, but my concentration had disappeared. The confidence I had carefully built over the years seemed to vanish within seconds.

Finally, I completed the presentation, but inside I felt defeated. Up to this day I have not gotten the right words with which to express my humiliation. A deep scar of guilt and shame still remains visibly embedded in my being, never wanting to let go, although the new me tries to forget the cruel treatment I was made to endure.

That moment stayed with me long after the debate ended. It affected how I saw myself and how I approached public speaking. Even when I later got enrolled into the University, I often tried to avoid giving presentations. Whenever lecturers assigned class presentations, I became anxious. On one occasion, I explained my situation to a lecturer and asked if I could present privately instead of speaking before the class. He listened intently. Although he allowed me to explain my

concerns, he also gave me advice that I have never forgotten. He told me that confidence grows when we face our fears, not when we avoid them.

At the time, I found those words difficult to accept. Today, I understand the wisdom behind them. Looking back, I realize that my greatest struggle was never my eyes. It was the fear that other people's opinions mattered more than my own belief in myself. The journey to overcome that fear would take many more years.

CHAPTER FIVE
Strabismus and the World of Work

Like many young graduates, I dreamed of finding meaningful employment after completing high school and eventually University. However, my journey was far more difficult than I had expected. While every graduate faces competition in the job market, I often wondered whether my strabismus was silently closing doors before I even had the chance to prove myself.

One thing I deliberately avoided was attaching my photograph to job applications alongside supporting documents. I feared that my appearance might influence an employer's decision before they had the opportunity to assess my qualifications, skills and character. For the same reason, I rarely took photographs, even with my friends and colleagues. I wanted to be judged by my abilities, not by the direction of my eyes.

Another tuning point occurred when I met the late Mr. Jonkunda Suso, a gentleman of exceptional character, whose kindness I don't think I will ever forget. I was introduced to him while seeking employment at the Yeli Tenda–Bamba Tenda Ferry Crossing Point. When I met him, he did not stare at my eyes or make me feel uncomfortable. Instead, he simply asked for my

credentials. I handed them to him, and after reviewing them, he said, "You are qualified for the job. I will forward your credentials to Management, and if they are satisfied, you will surely be employed."

Those words gave me hope. I felt that someone was looking beyond my appearance and recognizing my qualifications and potential. True to his word, he forwarded my credentials, and that act of confidence paved the way for my employment. The late Mr. Jonkunda Suso taught me an unforgettable lesson: true leaders judge people by their competence, integrity, and potential, not by their physical appearance. His belief in me changed the course of my life, and I remain deeply grateful for the opportunity he had given me. Being a benefactor of his good human qualities, all I can do for him is pray that Allah admit him to Jannatul Firdaus.

Suso's example reminds me that a single act of objectivity can transform a person's future. I hope more employers follow his example by giving people living with various physical and visible challenges the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities. Talent should never be overlooked because of appearance.

Employment is one of the greatest challenges many people living with strabismus face. Although strabismus does not define a person's intelligence, character, or ability, it often influences how others perceive affected people. Many employers and members of the public judge people living with strabismus based on their appearance. This happens even before they had had the

opportunity to acquaint themselves with their skills, qualifications and potentials of these vulnerable people. In 2012, I was employed by the Gambia Ports Authority Ferry Service Department as a Revenue Collector. My work required me to interact directly with hundreds of customers every day. As a frontline officer, maintaining eye contact with customers is an important part of communication, as this helps to build trust and confidence. For me, this was one of the most challenging aspects of the job. Because of my strabismus, making direct eye contact was often difficult. At times, while I spoke to one customer, another one would mistakenly believe I was talking to them. These misunderstandings sometimes created confusion and embarrassment. One incident remains vivid in my memory. After I accidentally handed a customer's change to the wrong person because of the confusion caused by my eye condition, the customer looked at me with much confusion. "Why would you choose to do this job, knowing full well that your eyes are not good?" he declared.

Those words deeply hurt me. I smiled and remained professional because I was at work, but inside I felt humiliated and embarrassed. I continued serving customers as though nothing happened, yet I carried the emotional pain with me. Sadly, this was not an isolated incident. Similar experiences occurred many times throughout my career. Living with strabismus affected both my educational and professional careers. Beyond the physical condition, many people with strabismus carry the emotional burden of being misunderstood, judged, or underestimated. Some struggle to secure

employment because employers assume they are unsuitable for customer-facing positions, despite having the qualifications, competence and dedication to perform the job successfully. I believe that people living with strabismus should be assessed on their ability, integrity and commitment, not on the direction of their eyes. A person's appearance should never be mistaken for a lack of intelligence, professionalism, or potential.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the management of the Gambia Ports Authority Ferry Service Department for giving me the opportunity to serve despite my condition. They looked beyond my appearance and trusted my ability to perform my duties as a frontline officer. That opportunity changed my life and demonstrated that inclusion is not an act of charity; it is an act of fairness.

My hope is that more employers will follow this example by creating workplaces where people with visible differences are judged by their competence rather than their appearance. Everyone deserves the opportunity to work with dignity, contribute to society, and achieve their full potential.

CHAPTER SIX
Journey to surgry

My Journey to Surgery: A Decision that Changed My Life For many years, I believed that living with strabismus was simply my destiny. I had learned to adapt to the comments, the stares and the silent struggle that accompanied me everywhere I went. Although I had achieved success in school and continued to work hard, there was always a part of me that wondered what life would have been like if my eyes had been different.

As time passed, another challenge emerged. My vision began to deteriorate. Reading became more difficult, and I noticed that I was straining my eyes more than before. Realizing that I needed professional help, I visited the Sheikh Zayed Regional Eye Care Centre in Kanifing (SZRECC). My intention was simple: to have my eyes examined and to obtain a pair of reading glasses that would help me continue my work effectively.

I never imagined that this visit would change the course of my life. After my eye examination, I met a kind and professional orthoptist, Mr. Sutay Jobe. He carefully examined my eyes and then said something I had never expected to hear. “Your squint can be corrected.” For a moment, I thought I had misunderstood him. I looked at him with surprise and I replied, “Sir, I don’t think that is possible in this country.” For more many years, I had lived

believing that nothing could be done. I had accepted my condition because I knew no other reality.

Mr. Jobe smiled and patiently explained that specialist eye surgeons periodically visited The Gambia to perform corrective surgery for people living with strabismus. He told me that children were often given priority because early treatment usually produces the best outcomes. Nevertheless, he promised that if an opportunity became available, he would do everything he could to include me. I left the clinic carrying something I had not carried for many years. That something was hope – hope of regaining what was long lost at birth – the ability to see as much as everyone else.

Days turned into weeks, and weeks in turn turned into months. Although I continued with my daily life, I often wondered whether I would ever receive the call. Part of me believed it would happen, while another part was afraid to hope too much. Then one day, my telephone rang .It was Mr. Sutay Jobe. He informed me that the visiting surgical team would soon arrive and asked me to come to the hospital for assessment. I immediately attended all the required examinations and medical tests. Even after completing every test, I still found it difficult to believe that the operation would actually take place. It almost seemed too good to be true.

Then came in a telephone call on 24 June, 2025. The caller was Mr. Jobe. His voice was calm and reassuring. “Everything is ready,” he had told me. “Your surgery is tomorrow. Please come to the hospital this evening.”

And so when I ended the call that fateful day, I heaved a sigh and sat quietly for a long time, looking into nothingness. I could hardly believe what I had just heard. The moment I had waited for almost my entire life had finally arrived. I chose not to tell many people for some obvious reason. I was afraid of the outcome. I feared option out of what I had been yearning for, and for once I doubted if I was truly ready to face the challenge. But perhaps not rushing to tell my people might have been the best option, for in every sense of the word the decision was likely not to trigger fear into their hearts. I waited for so long a time for this wonderful opportunity. Now that it came, I must gladly accept.

That evening I received the glad tidings, I went to the hospital, alone, all by myself. As I walked through the hospital corridors carrying my small bag, countless thoughts filled my mind. What if the surgery failed? What if something went wrong? What if I woke up and nothing had changed? I prayed quietly. I asked Allah to guide the hands of the surgeons, to protect me throughout the operation, and to grant me the courage to face whatever lay ahead. That night was one of the longest nights of my life. Sleep came only in short moments. Every time I closed my eyes, I imagined what it would feel like to wake up the next morning with a new beginning. For the first time in many years, I allowed myself to dream. Not of becoming someone different, but of becoming the person I had always believed I could be, free from the burden that had silently followed me since childhood.

The morning the surgery was scheduled to take place finally arrived. I did not know it then, but within a few hours, my life would change forever. Shortly before the surgery, I called my niece, Adama Fadera, and asked her to meet me at the hospital. I did not tell her exactly why I was there. She came to the hospital as fast as the urgency of my tone demanded.

Everything was so quick that by the time she arrived, the operation had already been completed. I was still unconscious from the anesthesia. When I eventually regained consciousness a few hours later, I could not open my eyes because they were covered with bandages. I could not see Adama, but I knew she was there. She held my hand and began crying. Although I was the one that lay on the hospital bed, I found myself trying to comfort her. I held her hand and reassured her that I would be fine and that she should not worry.

That moment will forever remain ingrained in my mind because sometimes it is only when we are at our most vulnerable states that we fully understand how deeply we are loved. The following morning, I woke up with my eyes still closed. Adama helped me take my medication as she remained seated next to my bed. Before midday, the surgeon came to examine my eyes. After completing the examination, he told me that everything had gone well and that I was free to go home. I could hardly believe him. I had expected to remain in the hospital for several days, perhaps even longer. Instead, I was told that I could continue my recovery at home. The surgeon advised me

to obtain the prescribed pain medication, eye drops, and ointment and to follow the instructions carefully.

I left the hospital carrying two very different emotions: hope and uncertainty. I was grateful that the operation had been successful, but I could not stop wondering what the coming days and weeks would bring. In the days following the surgery, my eyes became very red and slightly swollen. Although I had been told that this was part of the healing process, seeing my eyes in that condition still worried me. The surgeon reassured me that the redness would gradually disappear as I continued taking my medication and allowed my eyes time to heal.

For the first few days, I stayed at my sister's house because she lived closer to the hospital. Her support during that period meant a great deal to me. She carefully followed the doctor's instructions. Every night, she helped apply the prescribed ointment to my eyes and made sure I took my medication regularly. Like any other operation, strabismus surgery requires time for the body to heal. Some days were better than others. At times, I woke up with a headache. Sometimes my vision became blurred, and for some time I became highly sensitive to light. These symptoms worried me. After waiting for so many years, hoping for the opportunity to be operated on, every unexpected sensation made me wonder whether something had gone wrong. I asked the orthoptists what I was experiencing, and they reassured me that some discomfort and visual changes can occur during the recovery period and that healing takes time.

As the weeks passed, I returned to the hospital for follow-up examinations. During one of those visits, I was told that I was making good progress and that the alignment of my eyes had improved. Those words gave me renewed hope. So during my recovery period, the mirror became one of my closest companions. Almost every morning, I would stand in front of it and carefully examine my eyes. I wanted to see whether the alignment was making progress. I looked to see if any changes occurred, sometimes with hope and sometimes with uncertainty. After living with strabismus for so many years, it was difficult to believe that the person looking back at me in the mirror could truly be me.

CHAPTER SEVEN
Post-Surgery Experience

Although I initially hoped for complete correction following my surgery, I understood that perfection was not the ultimate objective. What mattered most was the progress I had achieved. Prior to the operation, my esotropia measured 75 prism diopters inward, a severity that led me to avoid looking at myself in the mirror because I found it difficult to confront my own reflection. Today, the mirror has become a source of reassurance.

Each time I take a look at my reflection, I am reminded of the remarkable journey I have undertaken. I no longer see an individual constrained by fear and insecurity. Instead, I see someone who has rediscovered hope, confidence, and a renewed sense of self-worth. Perhaps the most significant outcome of the surgery was not merely the alignment of my eyes but the restoration of my self-confidence.

Several months after the procedure, I received an unexpected phone call from the President of the Gambia Ferry Service Staff Association, inviting me to contest for the position of Assistant Welfare Secretary. Initially, I was hesitant. Memories of my high school inter-class debate resurfaced. During that period, my strabismus had significantly undermined my confidence to speak

publicly. The fear of ridicule and judgment had persisted for many years.

This invitation represented more than an opportunity to participate in an election; it was a test of my personal growth. It challenged me to assess whether I had truly overcome the fears that had shaped much of my life. I approached the mirror and examined my reflection carefully. Then I smiled. I even laughed. At that moment, I had recognized that I was no longer the apprehensive young man who once avoided eye contact. Looking at myself, I quietly muttered: “Yes, I can do this. I will not allow myself to be intimidated. “With this renewed confidence, I accepted the challenge.

The election was highly competitive, as the successful candidate would represent the welfare interests of more than 500 staff members. We travelled across ferry terminals, engaging with colleagues and presenting our vision. The most significant moment was the public debate, where each candidate was required to present a manifesto before a large audience of staff members. When my name was announced, I approached the podium with confidence. There was no fear. There was no anxiety. I spoke clearly, maintained steady eye contact, and articulated my ideas with conviction. It was a personal triumph, not over my opponents, but over the fear, insecurity, and self-doubt that had once defined me.

That day, I demonstrated to myself what I was capable of achieving. Throughout the campaign, I addressed each

gathering with confidence and determination. When the votes were counted, I emerged the winner by a significant margin, thereby being elected Assistant Welfare Secretary. It remains one of the most meaningful achievements of my life. Without undergoing surgery, I believe I would have declined this opportunity. There was no doubt fear would have engulfed my whole being. Today, my self-perception has fundamentally changed. I no longer concern myself with how others perceive me; instead, I focus on my identity and the value I can contribute. The surgery accomplished more than correcting my vision. It restored my confidence. It gave me the voice I thought I had long lost. Most importantly, it enabled me to rediscover myself.

CHAPTER EIGHT
The Hidden Pain: The Emotional, Social, and Psychological Impact of Strabismus.

When people look at someone with strabismus, they often notice only the eyes. What they do not see are the emotional battles taking place behind those eyes. They do not see the silent tears, the loneliness, the fear of rejection, or the constant struggle to fit into a society that often judges appearance instead of character.

For many people, the pain of strabismus begins at childhood. A child who should be learning, playing or building friendship may instead become the target of laughter, teasing and bullying. Classmates may invent hurtful nicknames, imitate the child's eye movements, or exclude them from games and social activities. These experiences can leave emotional scars that last well into adulthood.

Some children become quiet and withdrawn. Others lose confidence in the classroom because they fear being noticed. Even when they know the correct answers, they may avoid raising their hands because they do not want attention drawn to themselves. Over time, this loss of

confidence can affect academic performance, personal development, and future opportunities. The challenges do not end with childhood.

As young people grow older, they begin to worry about friendships, relationships and marriage. Sadly, some individuals are rejected simply because of the appearance of their eyes. Instead of being appreciated for their kindness, intelligence, honesty, or character, they are judged by a condition they neither have chosen nor desired for themselves.

In many communities, girls and young women with strabismus face even greater difficulties. Some are considered unsuitable for marriage because of myths and misconceptions surrounding the condition. Families may experience emotional pain as they watch their daughters being judged unfairly. Such discrimination has nothing to do with a person's worth or ability; it is the result of ignorance and stigma.

Employment presents another challenge. Some qualified and hard-working individuals are overlooked during recruitment because employers focus on appearance rather than competence. This not only deprives capable people of opportunities but also denies society of what is due to it. The emotional consequences can be overwhelming.

Some people develop low self-esteem and anxiety. Others avoid public gatherings, photographs, or eye contact because they fear negative reactions. Some

withdraw from social life altogether, believing they will never be fully accepted. I understand these feelings because I have lived them. There were moments when I questioned myself. There were times when I wondered whether people truly saw me or only noticed my eyes. Despite all else, I discovered something powerful: The opinions of others do not determine the value of the person.

Throughout my life, I was blessed with family members, friends, teachers, and colleagues who believed in me. They looked beyond my eyes, and they recognized my abilities and potentials. Their encouragement reminded me that acceptance from even a few sincere people can change a person's life forever. One of the greatest lessons I have learned is that confidence does not come from having a perfect appearance. It comes from accepting oneself, believing in one's abilities, and refusing to allow society's misconceptions define one's future. This is why awareness is so important. Every parent who teaches kindness, every teacher who protects a vulnerable child, every healthcare professional who educates a family, and every community leader who speaks against discrimination becomes part of the solution.

To those living with strabismus, I want you to know this: Your condition does not define your future. You are not less intelligent, less capable, less beautiful or less deserving of love and respect. Your dreams are as valid as your voice matters, and your life has purpose.

To society, I offer a simple appeal: Before judging someone's appearance, take time to know their heart. Behind every pair of misaligned eyes is a human being with hope, talent, ambition and emotion, just like everyone else. The greatest disability is not strabismus. The greatest disability is a society that refuses to see beyond appearances. When we replace judgment with understanding and prejudice with compassion, we create a world where every person can live with dignity, confidence and hope.

CHAPTER NINE
The Woman Who Saw Beyond My Eye

There are moments in life when one person changes everything. For me, that person is my wife, Musu Fatoumatta Banda. Before I met her, I had lived for many years with strabismus. Like many people with visible differences, I sometimes wondered how others saw me. Would they notice my character or only the misalignment of my eyes? Would anyone truly accept me for the sake of me? Those questions disappeared the day I realized that Musu saw something far greater than the eyes. She did not define me by my condition. She looked beyond my eyes and saw my heart, my values, my dreams, and the man I was striving to become. She loved me with sincerity, patience and compassion.

In her eyes, I was not a man with strabismus. I was simply the man she chose to spend her life with. Her decision to choose me, despite the misconceptions and prejudices that still exist in our society, remains one of the greatest blessings of my life. Out of countless possibilities, she chose me. That choice strengthened my confidence in ways I cannot fully describe. Whenever I doubted myself, she reminded me of my worth. Whenever I faced challenges, she stood beside me. She never made me feel different or less deserving of love. Instead, she gave me the courage to believe in myself.

Our marriage has taught me that true love is never based on physical appearance. It is built on trust, respect, sacrifice, friendship, faith, and a shared commitment to walk through life's joys and challenges together. Together, we have built a beautiful family.

Every smile, every shared dream, and every challenge we have overcome reminds me that love has the power to heal wounds that medicine alone cannot. My wife's love also strengthened my determination to undergo strabismus surgery. Throughout that journey, she remained a source of encouragement and hope. Whether the days were easy or difficult, I never walked alone.

Her love confirmed an important truth. Surgery may change the alignment of the eyes, but genuine love sees beyond appearances. It recognizes the dignity, character, and humanity of another person. As I reflect on my journey, I realize that Musu did far more than become my wife. She became my closest friend, my greatest supporter, and one of the strongest reasons I continue this mission of raising awareness about strabismus. This chapter is my tribute to her. Thank you, my dear Musu, for believing in me when I struggled to believe in myself. Thank you for choosing me. Thank you for seeing beyond my eyes. And thank you for proving that true love sees with the heart, not with the eyes.

CHAPTER TEN
Beyond the Horizon

Recently, our family received unexpected news: one of my daughters was diagnosed with strabismus. Although this was initially an emotional experience, it also led me to consider that, in our case, the condition may have a hereditary component rather than being the result of an injury or another acquired cause. As a father who has lived with strabismus for most of my life, I was naturally concerned about what the future might hold for her.

Unlike my own childhood, however, my daughter's condition was not one to fear about. Aside from benefitting from early diagnosis and access to treatment here in The Gambia, she had a wonderful father with whom her condition could be discussed and given the right attention and affection. Because her condition has been promptly identified, she stands the chance of enjoying opportunities that have not been available to me as a child. I am optimistic that she will be spared the years of stigma, discrimination, bullying and emotional hardship that shaped much of my own experience. Her diagnosis has strengthened my resolve rather than diminished it. It has reinforced my awareness that many parents are seeking answers, many children require timely care, and numerous families lack the resources or information needed to access appropriate treatment.

This is the more reason I am committed to establishing the Gambia Strabismus Support Association.

My goal is for it to serve as a source of support and hope for families, particularly those who are vulnerable and face barriers to care. Through awareness, education, support and advocacy, I aim to help ensure that every child with strabismus is diagnosed early, receives appropriate treatment, and grows up in an environment free from stigma and discrimination. When I look at my daughter, I do not see fear. I see hope. I see a future where children with strabismus no longer have to suffer in silence. I see a generation that will grow up knowing that treatment is available, that they are valued, and that they can achieve their dreams. My daughter's journey has renewed my determination to continue raising awareness so that no family has to face this condition without information, support and hope.

If my own childhood was marked by misunderstanding and missed opportunities, I pray that her childhood and the childhood of every child living with strabismus be filled with acceptance, timely treatment, confidence and love. That is the future I dream of, and that is the future I will continue working to build.

CHAPTER ELEVEN
Why I Chose to Tell My Story

For many years, people living with strabismus have suffered in silence. This was instead not because they had nothing to say but because they were afraid of how society would respond. The stigma, discrimination, bullying and hurtful comments many people experience often leave them feeling ashamed of a condition they did not choose for themselves. As a result, many hide their struggles, avoid talking about their experiences, and live with emotional pain that few people ever notice.

I decided to tell my story because I want that silence to end. If my journey encourages just one child to believe in themselves, one young person to seek treatment, one parent to take their child for an eye examination, or one adult to speak openly about living with strabismus, then sharing my life will undoubtedly be deemed to be worthwhile. It is my hope that this book will encourage people living with strabismus to come forward and tell their own stories, as every story matters, and every voice deserves to be heard.

By sharing our experiences, we remind one another that we are not alone. When people speak openly, stigma begins to lose its power. When communities understand the truth about strabismus, discrimination gives way to compassion. And when those living with the condition

stand together, they become a source of hope for future generations.

This book is not only my story. It is an invitation to every person living with strabismus to say: “This is my story, too. Together, our voices can replace silence with understanding, fear with confidence, and isolation with hope.”

CHAPTER TWELVE
A Promise to Every Child with Strabismus

Dear Child,

If you are reading this book, or if someone is reading it to you, I want you to know something very important:
Your beauty lies beyond your eyes.

Your value is immensely rich.
No mortal being can measure your capabilities.
And never think once that you are unloved.
Your eyes define not who you are.
Success has no bearing on your eyes.
Never forget that you have values.

I know that some days may turn out contrary to what you expect. People may stare at you; some may ask questions, and others may not understand your condition. A few may even say hurtful things. Please do not let those moments convince you that you are less than anyone else. I know how that feels because I have walked that road. I know for sure that there is hope. Today, there are doctors, nurses, optometrists, orthoptists, teachers, parents and caring people who want to help children like you. Treatments that were not available in the past are now available in abundance, and

the technology that comes along with them is truly breathtaking.

Above all else, there are people who believe in you and want to see you succeed. Never stop dreaming because of the way your eyes look. Dream of becoming a doctor, a teacher, an engineer, a lawyer, a scientist, an artist, a pilot, a business person, or anything else your heart desires. Your future is not limited to strabismus. It is shaped by your courage, your determination, and the people who encourage you along the way.

To every parent reading these pages, I make this promise: The Strabismus Association will work tirelessly to ensure that families receive information, support and hope. We will continue advocating for early diagnosis, affordable treatment, public awareness, and a society where no child is bullied or excluded because of strabismus.

To every healthcare professional, teacher, community leader, policymaker, volunteer and supporter, I ask you to walk with us. Together, we can create a future where children are known for their potential rather than judged by their appearance. And to every person living with strabismus, whether you are a child or an adult, I leave you with this message:

Feel not ashamed of your story.
Your story may become someone else's hope.
One voice can inspire another.
One act of kindness can change a life.
One diagnosis can lead to early treatment.
One book can begin a movement.

I began this journey believing I was writing about my own life journey. Now I know that this book belongs to everyone who has ever felt different, everyone who has searched for acceptance, and everyone who believes that compassion can change the world. My promise to you is simple: I will continue speaking. I will continue advocating. And I will continue believing that a day will come when every child with strabismus will have their confidence grown, their dignity restored, their opportunity seized, and their hope secured. Until that day, our work is not finished. This is not the end; it is only the beginning of a crucial task ahead.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN
Building the Gambia Strabismus Support Association

Every movement begins with a revolutionary mind – one that refuses to accept that things are meant to remain the way they are. For me, that journey began with my experience as a child living with strabismus. It continued through years of facing stigma, misunderstanding and silent emotional struggles. It grew stronger after my surgery, when I experienced the life-changing impact of treatment. It deepened even further when one of my daughters was diagnosed with strabismus.

I have come to accept quite early that my story was no longer just about me. It had become a responsibility to help others. The Gambia Strabismus Support Association emerged from that conviction. Its purpose is not only to support people living with strabismus but also to transform the way society understands the condition. Many children grow up believing they are different, and their parents often struggle to guide them along the path to adulthood. A number of adults carry emotional scars caused not by strabismus itself, but by stigma and discrimination. This association exists to change that reality.

Our Vision

To build a society where every person living with strabismus is treated with dignity, accepted without prejudice, and given access to timely, affordable quality eye treatment.

Our Mission

To improve the lives of people affected by strabismus through awareness, education, advocacy, early detection, access to treatment, family support, and partnerships with healthcare professionals and organizations.

Our Core Objectives

The Strabismus Association endeavours to:

- Raise national awareness among Gambians regarding the myths and misconceptions connected to strabismus;
- Promote early eye screening for infants and children;
- Support families by providing them with reliable information and emotional encouragement;
- Advocate for affordable access to eye examinations, glasses, surgery, and follow-up care;
- Assist vulnerable families in obtaining treatment through partnerships and fundraising;
- Encourage research and collaboration to improve eye care services;
- Promote inclusion and combat discrimination against people living with strabismus;

- Build partnerships with government institutions, healthcare providers, educational institutions, non-governmental organizations, and international partners;
  I believe that no child should suffer simply because they were born with a treatable eye condition. No parent should feel alone. No adult should lose opportunities because of misconceptions about strabismus.

  Through this association, I hope to create a network of hope where families can find support, healthcare professionals can work together, and communities can learn to replace prejudice with understanding. This association is more than an organization. It is a promise. It is a commitment to ensure that future generations will not endure the same struggles that shaped my childhood. I know that this journey requires dedication, partnerships and perseverance. There will be challenges and obstacles ahead, no doubt. But what is worth remembering is that with every great movement is a person willing to take the first bold step.

  Today, I take that step with hope, bearing in mind that every challenge comes with obstacles. It is with absolute pride that I invite healthcare professionals, educators, policymakers, community leaders, organizations, volunteers, donors, and every person of goodwill to join this mission. Together, we can build a future where no child is ashamed of their eyes, where every family has access to accurate information and quality care, and where people living with strabismus are recognized not for their condition but for their potential.

This book began as my personal story. It ends as an invitation, an invitation to create lasting change and to replace stigma with compassion. This invitation is geared towards building a better future for every person living with strabismus. The journey that began with one child in the village of Somita has now become a mission of hope for countless others. And this is only the beginning!

AFTERWORD

In this book, Ansumana Saho writes from his heart as he describes the impact of living with a severely crossed eye. His story is quite different from the cases of those numerous adults we come across at the Sheikh Zayed Regional Eye Care Centre (SZRECC) in Kanifing, The Gambia. It was not until 2022 that adults, infants, and children of all ages with strabismus had access to evaluation by ophthalmic personnel with special training in strabismus.

Prior to 2022, most Gambian children and adults did not receive treatment. Since the most common forms of strabismus begin in infancy or early childhood, this meant that, like Mr. Saho, these children grew to adulthood with eyes that were severely misaligned. Not only does the misalignment have the impact so well described in this book, but childhood strabismus can result in loss of vision in the deviated eye. This preventable vision loss can only be treated in early childhood. Not having access to care from a professional with special training can result in these children having a lifetime of preventable vision loss.

As part of its mission, the International Pediatric Ophthalmology & Strabismus Council (IPOSC) is working to improve access to eye care for children and adults of all ages that have been living with strabismus. In 2022, IPOSC developed an orthoptic training programme at

SZRECC in the Gambia. Orthoptists are non-physicians with special training in evaluating the vision and eyes of infants and children and in evaluating strabismus. IPOSC sends experienced orthoptists from Europe and North America to The Gambia to train orthoptic students and to mentor local graduates of the orthoptic course to become future course instructors. Mr. Sutay Jobe, the gentleman who alerted Mr. Saho to available treatment, is a graduate of IPOSC's orthoptic course.

Many Gambians are now receiving the treatment needed to live life with straight eyes. Unfortunately, there are many African countries in which there is no access or very limited access to the evaluation and treatment of strabismus. The good news is that the orthoptic training programme in The Gambia is beginning to attract students from some of these underserved countries. Lack of awareness of the need for and importance of having clinicians trained in the evaluation of strabismus has been a barrier to enrollment by students from underserved African countries.

IPOSC is very grateful to Mr. Saho for his genuine willingness to raise awareness of the impact of life with strabismus. His book is a remarkable testament to keep people informed about strabismus. It is IPOSC's hope that Mr. Saho's efforts to raise awareness of strabismus will result in more countries sending students to The Gambia for orthoptic training, thereby improving access to treatment.

Mr. Saho's effort in writing this book is undoubtedly rooted in his desire to impact countless lives of children and adults with strabismus. We thank Mr. Saho for his desire to encourage and help others with strabismus and for his courage to share his story.

Cindy Pritchard, Orthoptist, Vice Chairman, International Pediatric Eyecare Training (IPET) committee of IPOSC

For more information about IPOSC's efforts to improve access to treatment for strabismus and pediatric eye care go to www.iposc.org

To contact the author, Ansumana Saho, founder of Gambia Strabismus Support Association, email: sahoansu50@gmail.com

I welcome your comments, questions and personal stories. If this memoir has touched your life or inspired you, I would be pleased to hear from you.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Ansumana Saho is a Gambian author, strabismus advocate, and founder of the Gambia Strabismus Support Association. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Public Administration from the University of The Gambia.

Born with strabismus, Ansumana experienced the challenges of stigma and misunderstanding from an early age. His journey through treatment and surgery inspired him to raise awareness, encourage early diagnosis, and support others living with the condition.

Through his work and personal story, he hopes to help people see that a difficult experience can become a source of strength and purpose. Beyond the Eye: My Journey with Strabismus — From Pain to Purpose is his story of resilience, hope, and advocacy.