

Optometry students in Gondar, Ethiopia mark a year of service, leadership and community impact

In just one year, the Optometry Students Association (OSA/SVOSH-Gondar) has grown from a new student initiative into an active force for eye health awareness, student leadership and community service in Gondar.



Launch of the reformed Optometry Students Association in March 2025.

The Optometry Students Association (OSA) was launched on March 27, 2025, under the motto “Optometry will prevail in Ethiopia”.

OSA’s vision is to support the full development of optometry students while helping optometry gain recognition for its positive impact within the University of Gondar, the wider community and Ethiopia.

OSA’s mission is to support optometry students’ professional advancement and scientific innovations while preparing them to contribute to eye health promotion, ocular disease prevention and control of eye and vision-related problems.

During World Optometry Week 2025, OSA was formally introduced to students and staff, turning this important observance into a shared celebration of the department’s growing unity and leadership.

OSA’ held its first General Assembly on January 21, 2026, electing its Executive Council Board and committees and establishing the leadership structure needed to guide its activities.



Bethlehem Legesse
President

Mekya Seid
Vice-President



Dawit Wassie
General Secretary



OSA's first screening programme

On February 14 and 15, OSA held a community eye screening for students at the College of Medicine and Health Sciences. The activity linked vision and learning by identifying uncorrected refractive errors and other ocular conditions that can hinder students' ability to learn effectively. By addressing these often-overlooked barriers to education, OSA sought to help every student see better to reach their full academic potential.

The screening program saw a total of 506 students: 393 male and 113 female students. The optometry students' team conducted tests to assess ocular health and visual function.



Vision Screening for Students at Gondar University



506 university students benefited from the clinic.

Among the 46 students identified with refractive errors, 74 per cent were male. In addition, six students were found to have colour vision defects, which could affect performance in disciplines that rely on colour discrimination.

Introduction for new optometry students

Three OSA members led an orientation session for new optometry students, introducing them to the department, facilities, curriculum, support services, and the opportunities optometry offers.

A year after its creation, OSA partnered with the Ethiopian Optometric Association (EOA) on a three-day screening campaign at Tewodros and Maraki campuses and Fana Radio Broadcasting Corporation.

In total, 337 individuals were screened, including 172 females and 165 males. Of these 204 received reading glasses including 126 females and 78 males.



Gondar Department of Optometry: Faculty and Students Collaborating with the Ethiopian Optometric Association for World Optometry Week 2026

At Tewodros Campus, 245 staff members were screened, including 105 males and 140 females, and 174 received reading glasses, including 116 females and 58 males. In addition, 51 students from Tewodros and Maraki campuses were screened, including 35 males and 16 females.



Providing eye examinations for staff at Gondar University's Tewodros campus.

A further 41 people from Fana FM and Tsegey Bank were screened, including 25 males and 16 females. Of these, 30 received reading glasses, including 20 males and 10 females. Overall, the three-day screening campaign was a resounding success.

In its short existence, OSA has demonstrated the value of students' leadership and highlighted the need for accessible eye care services in Gondar and across Ethiopia.

For more information, contact Mr Merkineh Markos, Faculty Adviser, SVOSH-Gondar at markosmerkineh330@gmail.com



Merkineh Markos, Head of Department of Optometry, with his faculty members and students during the screening at Gondar Branch Office Fana Media Corporation.