

TRIBUTE TO MACTAR SISSOKO

A tribute to our colleague Sissoko shared by Dr Boubacar Sarr, Senegal

Rarely has a day been as sad as 17 November 2021 when the death of Mactar Sissoko was announced.

This sad news has affected all those involved in eye health in Senegal as Mactar played a vital role in the noble fight against visual impairment.

A nurse specialising in ophthalmology, Mactar began his career in 1974 with the Dispensaire Itinérant d'Ophtalmologie (a mobile ophthalmology clinic), which was the only organisation providing eye care in the country outside the Dakar and Saint-Louis regions for two decades.

Mactar travelled all over Senegal, visiting every corner of the country for more than a quarter of a century in order to provide eye care to its poor and underserved communities.

His exceptional knowledge of the country, his great organisational skills, his talent for dialogue and his deep capacity for empathy meant that he was accepted and idolised by the people he met.

When he joined the National Programme Against Blindness team, he became the go-to person for all field operations, notably for mass curative interventions such as camps for cataracts and trichiasis and the mass distribution of azithromycin.

In fact, there has not been a single survey in Senegal since 2004 without Mactar being heavily involved, whatever the nature (trachoma, rapid assessment of avoidable blindness

[RAAB], etc.).

His energy was noteworthy at all stages of such activities, where he was involved in the preparation, logistics, organisation on the ground and, in particular, supervision. This last task was supported by his well-known leadership abilities, which were appreciated by all in the field.

His professionalism and intrinsic qualities led him to become a certified lead trainer for tropical data without any difficulties. From then on, his skills were sought after throughout the sub-region – in Mali, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire,

Guinea, etc.

The death of Mactar Sissoko leaves a great void in Senegal. To honour his memory, eye health professionals are more determined than ever to achieve the major goals of eliminating trachoma as a public health problem and reducing the prevalence of blindness.

