

VISION 2020 : A global initiative

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Abstract : An estimated 45 million people around the world are blind¹. Mostly lost their sight to diseases that are treatable or preventable. Eighty percent of them live in the developing countries where chronic economic deprivation is exacerbated by the added challenge of falling vision². In response to this global need, the World Health Organization (WHO), Geneva, Switzerland, with the International Agency for the prevention of Blindness (IAPB), a partnership of eye care organizations, launched the VISION 2020 : The Right to Sight initiative in 1999³⁻⁵. It aims to eliminate avoidable blindness in the world by 2020.

Keywords: *blind, global, deprivation, eye, sight*

Introduction: Vision 2020 : The Right to Sight is a global initiative launched by the World Health Organization and a Task Force of International Non-governmental Organizations to combat the gigantic problem of blindness in the world.

It was launched in Geneva on February 8, 1999 by then Director General of the WHO, Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland. International agency for the Prevention of Blindness, funding agencies international, non-governmental and private organizations that collaborate with the WHO in the prevention and control of blindness⁶.

Vision 2020 is a partnership that provides guidance, technical and resources support to countries that have formally adopted it's agenda.

Aim : The mission of the vision 2020 Global Initiative is to eliminate the main causes of avoidable blindness by the year 2020 by facilitating the planning, development and implementation of sustainable national eye-care programmes i.e a world in which no one is needlessly blind and where those with unavoidable vision loss can achieve their full potential.

Objectives :

1. The Right to sight accomplishes it's mission as it attains the major objectives : Raise the profile in the key audiences of the causes of avoidable blindness and the solutions that will help to eliminate the problem.
2. Identify and secure the necessary resources around the world in order to provide an increased level of prevention and treatment programmes.
3. Facilitate the planning development and implementation of the three core vision 2020 strategies by National Programmes.

Core Strategies

1. Disease control : facilitate the implementation of specific programmes to control and treat the major causes of blindness.
2. Human resource development : support training of ophthalmologists and other eye care personnel to provide eye care.
3. Infrastructure and appropriate technology development : assist to improve infrastructure and technology to make eye care more available and accessible.

Strategies for Dealing with the leading causes of Blindness	
Disease	Description of intervention
Cataract	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extracapsular cataract surgery with Intraocular lens. This will require the training of additional cataract surgeons.
Trachoma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bilamellar rotation surgery for lids scarred by entropion. • Antibiotic distribution with tetracycline or azithromycin. • Facial cleanliness • Environmental controls
Onchocerciasis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ivermectin distribution
Childhood blindness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Vitamin deficiency ➤ Cataract ➤ Retinopathy of prematurity ➤ Refractive error ➤ Low vision ➤ Diabetic retinopathy ➤ Glaucoma 	<p>A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nutrition education and when necessary, vitamin A distribution • Surgical teams trained and equipped • Neonatal centers made aware of the need for screening of neonates with appropriate referral • Refractionists trained in the determination of visual correction and making affordable spectacles • Training of low-vision specialists • Provision of affordable low-vision aids • Raise awareness on the part of all health care workers of the need to refer all patients with diabetes for screening • Laser treatment when indicated • Development of appropriate screening tools to identify those with the disease. • Education of the public about glaucoma and the need for it's detection and treatment

Conclusion

Vision 2020 will serve as a common platform to facilitate a focused and coordinated functioning of all the partners in eliminating avoidable blindness by the year 2020. It will further develop and strengthen the primary health/eye care approach to the problem of avoidable blindness. Broad regional alliances will be sought to eventually develop a global partnership for eye health.

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