



International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness

[www.iapb.org](http://www.iapb.org)

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## Chapeau

*The International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) provides the overarching alliance for the eye care sector and is widely recognized as the global leader in eye health advocacy, policy and strategy. Eye health and vision have widespread and profound implications for many aspects of life, health, sustainable development, and the economy. Yet more than 2.2 billion people, almost one-third of humanity, are living with vision impairment. At least 1.1 billion people suffer the severe socioeconomic consequences of preventable sight loss because they don't have access to basic eye care services. Due to distinct and growing development challenges that make distribution and readily available access to health services difficult, 90% of avoidable sight loss is experienced by people in low-and-middle-income countries. Women and girls are disproportionately affected, representing 55 percent of people suffering from moderate to severe vision impairment but less likely to access services. Without change, 1.8 billion people will have sight loss by 2050.*

*The WHO World Report on Vision and the adoption of General Assembly resolution 75/310 'Vision for Everyone: accelerating action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals' recognized the importance of vision as a worldwide, cross-cutting development issue distinctively plagued by inequality and a foundation for sustainable development. Addressing eye health is integral to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and strengthening the delivery of eye care within Universal Health Coverage has the potential to improve the lives of millions of people globally.*

## Chapter I. Sustainable development and financing for development

*Global eye health has wide, cross-cutting and cross-sectoral linkages and effects that makes it relevant to all the SDGs. Thus, efforts to mitigate the impact of avoidable sight-loss will have a direct influence on overall SDG progress. Proven eye care interventions, such as cataract surgery and glasses, are among the most cost-effective in all of health care, and investment in eye health provides among the highest ROI of any disease intervention modelled through similar investment cases. Mobilizing national action and financial commitment on vision and eye health, particularly in low- and middle-income countries where the need is most prevalent will accelerate states' ability to eradicate poverty and reduce the inequalities and vulnerabilities that leave people behind, supporting the potential for individual and shared progress. .*

*As a cross-cutting issue, political and financial commitments to the prevention and treatment of sight loss must be considered in settings beyond health care from wider sectors including education, industry and businesses. Restoring a person's sight creates pathways for success at school, the ability to earn an income and greater quality of life.*

*Recommendations:*

- 1. Member States must commit to put in place an integrated and whole-of-government approach to eye care, building synergies with other development priorities and strengthening their collaboration with academia, research institutions, the scientific community, civil society and the private sector, in order to improve safe and affordable access to eye care services.*
- 2. There remains a significant funding gap to support access to eye health services, primarily within the national health care systems around the world. An integrated approach delivered through partnerships, wider coalitions and with a renewed strategic ambition can unlock new resources from funders who want to support big, sustained, integrated solutions.*

## **Chapter II. International peace and security**

*With conflicts and climate-related disasters showing no signs of abating and protracted displacement growing, it is critical that we address the challenges of accommodating the demands for accessing health services for displaced and shock-affected populations in volatile and low-resourced environments. Broken medical supply chains, over-stretched facilities and disrupted access to healthcare will lead to a significant increase in vision impairment and permanent sight loss for displaced populations due to an inability to access routine care. This will have a long-term impact on people's ability to learn, access fulfilling work and will lead to an increased risk of permanent blindness, depression and death*

*The UN Resolution on Vision explicitly states that the burden of eye health conditions has a disproportionate impact on people in vulnerable situations, including refugees, internally displaced persons (IDP) and migrants, slowing progress towards achieving health-related Sustainable Development Goals as well as reducing inequalities within and among countries.*

*Recommendation:*

- 1. Providers and humanitarian health actors have developed health policies, guidelines, frameworks, and structures to improve delivery of health services in humanitarian crises. However, eye health service guidelines are not found in humanitarian relief policies. A higher level of awareness on the fundamental role eye health and good vision plays in saving lives and rebuilding community resiliency in the context of conflict and disaster is required to effectively address current and future needs.*

## **Chapter III. Science, technology and innovation and digital cooperation**

*Recognizing the crucial role that technology development and transfer must play in addressing the challenges and the opportunities posed by the magnitude and impact of eye health and vision impairment, parties to the United Nations Resolution on Vision agreed to promote, facilitate and finance the transfer of knowledge and technology to developing nations, and to assist those countries especially vulnerable in addressing existing deficiencies and meeting the costs of adaptation.*

*Delivering affordable, high-quality health services, particularly in remote and low-income requires a multi-faceted approach that involves the use of technology as well as the coordinated efforts of people working across sectors.*

*Recommendation:*

- 1. Commit to strategic investments in data health systems and service capacity, along with evidence-based applications, to maximise the potential of technology to improve coverage, accessibility, effectiveness, efficiency, and affordability of eye health services.*

2. *Prioritise the achievement of the full Continuum of Care (early identification, education and support, assistive technology, rehabilitation services) will revolutionise eye health care in the next decade and support national progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.*

## **Chapter IV. Youth and future generations**

*Globally, at least 450 million children have a sight condition that needs treatment, with 90 million children currently living with some form of sight loss; the majority in low- and middle-income countries. Younger generations are experiencing worsening vision at a faster-than-expected rate, with 50% of the world's population expected to be myopic by 2050. Children and youth with unaddressed vision impairments are up to five times less likely to be in formal education, have poorer educational outcomes, and risk future earning potential and well-being. Unless action is taken now, future need will exceed capacity and the world's youth will be left behind.*

*Increasing access to education and ensuring learning and achievement for all is critical for human capital, security and economic growth. Well-integrated, innovative strategies to address the growing need around eye health are therefore required. School eye health programmes, including sight screenings, referral systems and health promotion, are highly cost-effective to administer, and their benefits are significant – with potentially more than 700 million children throughout the world gaining access to crucial services.*

*Recommendation:*

1. *Prioritise the implementation of school eye health programmes to tackle the impact of rapid growth of vision impairment amongst younger people, help guarantee increased school attendance, educational attainment and enable long term social and economic security.*

## **Chapter V. Transforming global governance**

*Opportunities to spark generational-level change are rare. It requires the right global commitment, strong government and community support, a clear pathway forward, and the right leadership to guide the way. Strong leadership and good governance with clear policy, regulations, and accountability is particularly relevant to eye health, as in many countries services are often provided in the private sector.*

*Recommendation:*

1. *To effectively address eye health and end avoidable sight loss, Member States must take universal actions to improve health care quality through strengthened regulatory frameworks and good governance.*