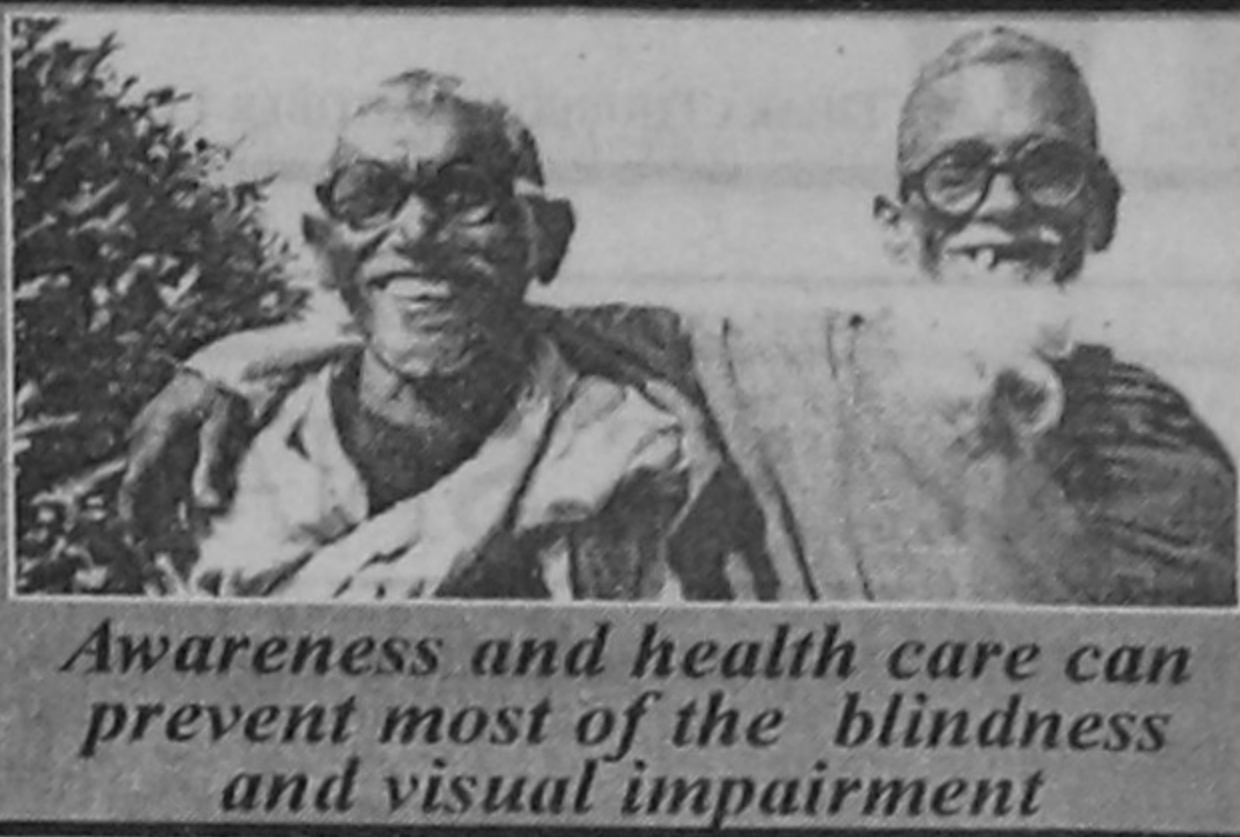




World Sight Day 2001



Special Supplement

Dhaka, Thursday, October 11, 2001

Today—the second Thursday of October 2001—is the World Sight Day. The day is being observed in Bangladesh, as elsewhere in the world as an annual event to focus attention on the problem of global blindness that every five seconds one person in the world goes blind and a child goes blind every minute.

The observance of the World Sight Day this year has a special significance because the programme has been coordinated by Vision 2020: The Right To Sight, a global coalition of 26 international organizations in partnership with the World Health Organization, which aims to eliminate avoidable blindness by the year 2020.

Launched originally by Lions Clubs International Foundation in 1998 the World Sight Day has been made an official Vision 2020; the Right to Sight event in the year 2000.

The main objective of the world Sight Day is to raise awareness among the people of different strata in the society that 80 per cent of the blindness could be prevented or cured. Besides educating the target group about blindness prevention the Day also aims at encouraging the governments, particularly the health ministers, key persons in various corporations and other possible funding sources to invest in global blindness prevention programme.

The observance of World Sight Day under Vision 2020 guidelines in 2000 was indeed a great

World Sight Day Today

success from the point of global response. Over thirty countries observed this day through various events and activities, and many of these activities got widest coverage in the media at national level. Many thousands of signatures were also gathered

and affluent public to raise the resources necessary to make needless blindness a thing of the past.

The Vision 2020 members also plans to drive website traffic to www.v2020.org, and educate the target audiences about blind-

signing up on the website: www.v2020.org or on petition sheets/posters which will summarise the official Vision 2020 Global Declaration of support.

It may be noted that UN secretary General Kofi Annan, numerous ministers of health and many

2. Eye tests—come and get your eye tested for World Sight Day
3. Eye surgeries—to perform as many eye surgeries as possible around the globe
4. Public education—schools, sponsored activities, rea-

health/experts etc. In Bangladesh, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, World Health Organization, Sight Savers International, ORBIS International, Helen Keller International, Impact Foundation Bangladesh and National Forum of the Organizations Working for the Disabled planned together to observe the World Sight Day through the following events:

1. Supplement in 4 national dailies
 2. Round table discussion on blindness issues with the media and key representatives from the Ministry of Health, ophthalmic community and eye care organizations
 3. Free eye surgeries with implantation of Intra-ocular Lens in several eye hospitals in the country during October
 4. Eye sight testing of workers in selected garment factories in Dhaka
 5. Joint Rally with the "Disability Forum" on White Cane Safety Day (October 15).
- If the above activities could be successfully carried out, it is hoped, the world Sight Day events would not only be meaningful but also encourage many others to join the day's activities in future thereby creating wider awareness about the need of eye care for eliminating avoidable blindness from all over the world.

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for the Vision 2020 Global Declaration of support including ministers of health or representatives of ministry of health from a good number of countries.

This year too, the global coalition of Vision 2020 members and their local partners are organizing hundreds of events to observe the day in a befitting manner to create awareness about avoidable blindness as a major public health issue. In order to achieve the objectives of Vision 2020, the coalition also calls for support from the national governments, health care workers, business corporations

ness prevention and to generate support for programme activities of the member organizations. The target audiences under Vision 2020 guidelines are General public, health ministers, politicians and policy makers, medical professionals, patients, consumers, international media and national and local media.

There is also plan for launching "Sign up for Sight" as an international World Sight Day activity. Members of the public will be encouraged to demonstrate their support for the Vision 2020 campaign by either

other profiles have already signed up their support in this respect.

The Vision 2020 collaboration aims to collect 20 million signatures to show governments that there is international support for investment in tackling avoidable blindness. Individual member organizations would also take necessary steps to help achieve the goal and promote "sign up for sight" through their own websites or through written petitions/posters.

The other global activities of the Day include:-

1. Vitamin A distribution
2. Pro-bono advertising
3. Poster campaigns—used at events, in retail outlets and other locations -- to incorporate the website address www.v2020.org.
4. Musical concerts in the dark or other black out event—e.g. dinner/theatre/light projection of V2020 logo on building
5. Live internet link ups to even/operation/screening
6. Online chats from around the world e.g. with celebrities/ministers of

VISION 2020: THE RIGHT TO SIGHT GLOBAL DECLARATION OF SUPPORT

The Issue: There are 45 million blind people and a further 135 million people with serious visual impairment in the world today. If urgent action is not taken these numbers will double over the next 20 years. This is unacceptable both from a humanitarian and socio-economic point of view. Cost-effective interventions are available for all major blinding conditions.

The Problem: The resources available are insufficient to tackle the problem, particularly in developing countries where nine out of 10 of the world's blind live. There is a lack of trained eye personnel, medicines, ophthalmic equipment, eye care facilities and patient referral systems.

The Solution: VISION 2020 – an international partnership between those working for blindness prevention has been formed. This is a new initiative to raise awareness, mobilise resources and develop national blindness prevention programmes with governments to prevent an additional 100 million people from being blind by 2020.

Launched in Geneva on 18th February 1999, VISION 2020: The Right to Sight is an unprecedented global partnership aiming to eliminate avoidable blindness by the year 2020. The partnership involves the World Health Organization, the Task Force of the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (currently consisting of the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness, Christoffel-Blindenmission, Helen Keller Worldwide, ORBIS International, Inc., Sight Savers International, International Federation of Ophthalmological Societies, Al Noor Eye Foundation, Lions Clubs International Foundation, Organisation pour la Prévention de la Cécité, The Fred Hollows Foundation, International Centre for Eyecare Education, The Carter Center, Operation Eyesight Universal, Agenzia Internazionale per la prevenzione della Cecità, International Trachoma Initiative), international non-governmental organisations, philanthropic institutions and other bodies and individuals working with national governments.

VISION 2020's mission is: "to eliminate the main causes of blindness in order to give all people of the world, particularly the millions of needlessly blind, the right to sight." In recognition of the fact that 100 million people will needlessly go blind by the year 2020 unless joint global action is taken now, please endorse this initiative by signing below.

Signature:
Name: Kofi A. Annan
Position: Secretary-General, United Nations
Date: 3 December 1999

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Signature:
Name: Sheikh Fazlur Karim Selim
Position: Minister, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Bangladesh,
Date: 30-11-2000



Vision 2020: The Right to Sight campaign is a global effort to advocate the importance of preventing and treating blindness with the aim of mobilizing new resources from government, corporate and voluntary sectors of society for use in the Global Initiative programme.

The Vision 2020 campaign was officially launched in February 1999 at WHO in Geneva and was further promoted and discussed at the Assembly of the International Agency for Prevention of Blindness held in Beijing.

During the last two years the World Health Organization, the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness and a group of non-governmental development organizations involved in eye care have been working together to address the question 'How to reduce the number of blind persons in the world to a minimum by the year 2020'.

The result of these discussions is the 'Global Initiative to Eliminate Avoidable Blindness' and the campaign to create awareness and new resources called 'Vision 2020: The Right to Sight'. This article seeks to address four questions:

1. Why the programme against blindness?

Bangladesh, a signatory to the Vision 2020, formally launched VISION 2020 on as part of its policy to actively work in line with the global Vision 2020 initiative for elimination of avoidable blindness. Subsequently, a group of experts worked under the auspices of the Directorate of Health Services and Sight Savers International to develop a National Eye Care Plan for Bangladesh. The plan was submitted to the Director General of Health Services in February 2001 for inclusion in the health and population sectoral plan.

The proposed plan was based on the data provided by a national blindness and low vision prevalence survey conducted among population older than 30 years by the National Institute of Ophthalmology with financial and technical support from Sight Savers International, and also on available information on childhood blindness, including nutritional blindness.

The national survey revealed that cataract was responsible for 85 per cent of the blindness among people above 30-year age group in the country. It is to be noted that cataract is an age-related condition and with the growing population of older persons in the country there would be an increase in cataract blindness.

The survey also revealed that nearly 69,000 cataract surgeries were performed in 1999 in the country, constituting a cataract surgical rate of 536.9

The Right to Sight

2. What are Global Initiative and Vision 2020?
 3. How the Global Initiative can be implemented?
 4. Who are involved?
- Why the programme against blindness**
- The available data suggests that by the year 2020 the world blind population has reached approximately 50 million, of which the majority live in Asia and Africa.
- Approximately about 8 to 10 million people become blind each year and it is estimated that around 6 to 8 million people, who are blind, die every year. The result, thus, is a net increase of 1 to 2 million blind persons per year.
- The increase in blindness is due to an increasing world population and increased life expectancy, with more people all over the world now living beyond the age of 60.
- Of the 50 million blind people in the world, it is estimated that, approximately half is due to cataract, 15 per cent due to trachoma, 4 per cent due to blindness in children and one per cent due to onchocerciasis. These four conditions make up 70 per cent of the world's blindness. The remaining causes are glaucoma (approx. 15 per cent), diabetic retinopathy (5 per cent) and a

variety of other causes (10 per cent).

Despite the efforts of UN agencies, national governments, and non-governmental organizations, blindness is an increasing problem causing loss of quality of life to the individual; and an economic burden on the individual, family and society in general.

A recent study from India estimated that the annual cost of blindness for every 1 one million population is approximately four million US dollar a year. It was, therefore, decided that all those who are involved in prevention of blindness and eye care delivery, should take a concerted initiative to address the major causes of blindness. And the goal before all will be to reduce the number of blind people in the world from an estimated 75 million in the year 2020, (if the present situation does not change), to a target of 25 million.

The Global Initiative programme consists of four five-year phases commencing in the year 2000. The following four diseases were identified for priority action in the first phase:

- Cataract
- Trachoma (not a problem in Bangladesh)
- Onchocerciasis (not a problem in Bangladesh)
- Childhood blindness and

visual loss

- Together with this disease orientated approach it is recognized that there is an acute need for:
- Human resource development, and
- Infrastructure development (emphasizing appropriate technology).

It is planned to create regional and national initiatives against blindness in individual countries. In order to achieve the goal of the programme it is highly important that governments, UN agencies and NGO's work together in co-ordination, and involve eye care professionals, health policy makers and managers, and philanthropists (individual and corporate). That is, it requires those with technical professional skills, those involved in decision-making and having management skills and those who have access to the needed resources.

The International Agency for Prevention of Blindness is a forum, which brings together eye care professionals, UN Agencies, non-government development organizations and national eye care programmes. The members of IAPB together with the WHO, therefore have a vital role to play in advocacy, planning and implementation of the Global Initiative programme.

Message



Today, October 11, 2001 marks the second World Sight Day being observed all over the world. Bangladesh being a signatory of VISION 2020 is also observing the day in a befitting manner with the participation of Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, World Health Organisation (WHO) and the non government agencies working in eye care field. This year's theme for the World Sight Day is "The Right to Sight-Awareness and Health Service can prevent most of the visual disability." The theme has special significance for developing countries like Bangladesh.

World Sight Day aims to raise awareness of the problem of unnecessary blindness and the need for restoration of sight to over 20 million needlessly blind people in the world as a basic human right.

Blindness is a burning issue in our country. But unfortunately, the issue was not properly placed in our health priority. In our country there are about 0.6 million blind people, 84% of them are due to cataract which can be prevented through simple surgery. So, training of more ophthalmic manpower, provision of infrastructure and mobilisation of resources demand attention on priority basis.

To recognise the importance of blindness issue, the Government has already taken necessary steps to integrate Primary Eye Care with Primary Health Care in HPSP. We are now in a way of implementing National Eye Care Plan.

Let us work together to manage the task of eliminating avoidable blindness. I hope the spirit of World Sight Day will continue to inspire us to restore sights of blind persons.

M. Fazlur Rahman
Secretary
Ministry of Health & Family Welfare
Govt. of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Message



World Sight Day is being observed today, October 11, 2001 in Bangladesh as elsewhere all over the world with befitting enthusiasm. The theme of the Day this year is to focus that Awareness and Health Care can prevent most of the visual impairment. Countrywide programme has been initiated jointly by the Government and non-government organisations to observe the Day. The observance of World Sight Day bears a great significance in respect of Bangladesh's Health and other socio-economic issues.

There are about six lakh blind people in Bangladesh and several times higher others are visually handicapped. This huge bulk of population can be made partners in the country's efforts for economic development. Realising the gravity of this problem and with a view to eradicating the avoidable blindness Bangladesh Government has expressed its solidarity with WHO action plan Vision 2020 – Right to Sight. To reach eye care service to grass root level steps have already been taken to incorporate eye care into Health and Population activities of the country. I believe, the implementation of the programme will help reduce the number of blind people in our country.

I wish all success of the World Sight Day observance.

ABM Ahsanullah
Director General
Health Directorate

Proposed National Eye Care Plan of Bangladesh

(number of operations per million blind persons in one year). As the number of cataract blind increases annually by 85,000 to 120,000 persons, the findings of the survey clearly warned of a steady rise in the backlog of the cataract and stresses on the imperative need to increase the numbers and improve the quality of cataract surgeries in the country. Keeping in mind some of the vital findings of the survey and other available information, the proposed national eye care plan set the target of eliminating avoidable blindness by the year 2020, as stipulated by WHO, through integrated primary/health care approach using the national health care system. Considering the magnitude of the efforts need to eliminate avoidable blindness and achieve the goal of Vision 2020 – the right to sight – the proposed national plan aimed at carrying out the activities in phased process through four 5-year plan of action. The National Plan aims at addressing the following key issues: –

- Equity through ensuring afford-

- ability and accessibility,
- Assurance of quality eye care,
 - Reducing gender disparities in the eye disease/visual disability burden,
 - Poverty alleviation through visual disability prevention,
 - Greater programme efficiencies,
 - Optimal use of existing resources,
 - Innovative approaches to secure long-term sustainability and
 - Close government and non-government and private sector partnerships.
- For the successful implementation of the proposed Bangladesh National Eye Care Plan representatives of 36 organizations, including Government Health Ministry, Health Directorate and NGOs working in the eye sector in the country, recently held a workshop in Dhaka. The representatives of these organizations, in course of their deliberations, identified the potential threat that might stand in the way of smooth the national plan and made a series of action plan in the form recommendations.

- Following are the sector-wise recommendations:
- Human Resource Development**
1. Adequate training of all eye surgeons.
 2. Training of medical officers and mid-level health service providers at district hospitals in eye care and community ophthalmology.
 3. Training of health assistants from community clinics and primary eye care.
 4. Training of paramedics and ophthalmic nurses to provide support at district and tertiary levels.
 5. Training of medical assistants in refraction.
 6. Coordination and implementation of training programmes.
- Structural Planning and Management**
- National Council for the Blind should be restructured to coordinate blindness control activities in the country.
 - District level coordination and public-private partnership in blindness control activities

- should be strengthened.
 - MIS for blindness control should be developed and implemented.
 - Cost sharing mechanism should be introduced.
- Disease Control**
- All eye units must be provided with adequate ophthalmic equipment.
 - Barriers to cataract surgeries should end.
 - Reducing blindness through refraction.
- Before making the recommendations the participants took into consideration the following key features: –
1. Bangladesh is the only country that developed a National Eye Care Plan in accordance with Vision 2020 guidelines.
 2. Cases of Surgical rate needed to be double to meet 2005 target.
 3. IOL rate was 29 per cent compared to target of plus 95.
 4. 12 priority districts covering all six divisions were identified.
 5. Nearly 50 percent was a priority for

6. Need to promote PEC in PHC to reduce avoidable causes.
 7. Reduction of childhood blindness was a programme priority of ORBIS International.
 8. Very little service was provided currently on refraction.
 9. Need to focus on children and over 40s for refraction.
 10. Plan intended to train 15000 refractionists by 2010.
 11. Estimated need was 1.5 million for low-vision.
- Critical Issues yet to be Incorporated in the National Eye Care Plan
- Vitamin A deficiency is the main cause of childhood blindness in many developing countries. Surveys carried out by Helen Keller International and Institute of Public Health Nutrition have shown the number of children suffering from vitamin A deficiency in Bangladesh has fallen significantly in recent years. This is largely because of the effectiveness of the government's vitamin A capsule distribution programme. But there is still plenty to do. The vitamin A capsule distribution programme must be sustained. For a long-term solution to vitamin A deficiency, other programmes to increase vitamin A consumption must be expanded, such as home gardening, dietary diversification and food fortification.

