

World Sight Day (WSD) is the international day of awareness, held annually to focus attention on the global issue of avoidable blindness and visual impairment.

The theme of World Sight Day 2008 (WSD08) is the ageing eye:

“Eyes on the Future – fighting vision impairment in later life”

World Sight Day in INDIA

Vision 2020: The Right to Sight - INDIA jointly with Government of India & Government of Maharashtra is celebrating World Sight Day 2008 in Pune on October 08, 2008. The National Celebration of World Sight Day will be held at Shankarseth Sable Auditorium, HV Desai Eye Hospital in Pune on **October 08, 2008** to promote awareness on the theme **“Eyes on the future – fighting vision impairment in later life”**. This function will be presided over by Dr. RK Srivastava, Director General Health Services, Govt. of India. Other guests include Dr. (Mrs.) Rachel Jose, Additional Director General Health Services, Govt. of India, Dr. Basant Bagdi, Additional Director Health Services, Govt. of Maharashtra. Standard Chartered Bank has come forward to support the cause of blindness in India and will be partnering VISION 2020 INDIA in the event.

To mark this day, a **National Symposium on “Vision Impairment in Later Life”** is being conducted on **October 08, 2008** in the premises of HV Desai Eye Hospital, Pune. This National Symposium is being attended by representatives from the Central & State Government, International NGOs, National NGOs, Heads of Eye Care institutions, Eye Care Program Managers, Eye Care service delivery professionals which include Ophthalmologists, Ophthalmic Paramedics, and private practitioners. Issues related to VISION Impairment in older population will be discussed by eminent experts from across the country. The clinical management and social aspects of blindness in the aged population will also be discussed in the forum in an effort to better understand the importance of managing and preventing such blindness.

To highlight the importance of the subject, there will be a national advertisement released in all leading newspapers across the country on October 9, 2008 emphasising the need to take care of vision of the elders, making a positive impact on their quality of life.

‘An ageing population is something to be proud of’





ANNEXURE - 1

VISION 2020: The Right to Sight

VISION 2020 is the global initiative for the elimination of avoidable blindness, operated jointly by the World Health Organization and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) and its members.

VISION 2020 members, including international NGOs, professional associations, institutions and corporations, work with each other and with governments, private and voluntary agencies. Together, they work to prevent, treat and cure the conditions that lead to blindness and vision impairment, and to help those with unavoidable blindness achieve their full potential.

Blindness and Vision Impairment: Global Facts

According to WHO estimates:

- ❖ **Every 5 seconds someone in the world goes blind - and a child goes blind every minute**
- ❖ 45 million people worldwide are blind
- ❖ 124 million people have low vision
- ❖ In addition, 153 million people are vision-impaired due to uncorrected refractive error
- ❖ Every year, the number of totally blind people is increased by 1-2 million
- ❖ **75% of blindness is treatable and/or preventable**
- ❖ 90% of blind people live in the poorest developing countries
- ❖ Women face a greater risk of vision loss than men
- ❖ Without proper interventions the number of blind will increase to 75 million by 2020
- ❖ Restoration of sight, and blindness prevention strategies are among the most cost-effective interventions in health care
- ❖ **80% of the world's 45 million blind people are over 50**

Over two decades, it is hoped that VISION 2020 will prevent 100 million people from becoming blind.

VISION 2020 seeks to eliminate the main causes of avoidable blindness in order to give all people in the world, particularly the millions of needlessly blind, the right to sight

When is someone an older person?

Most high-income countries use the chronological age of 65 years to define older people. For Africa, the current recommended cutoff is 50 years. Although the United Nations currently have no standard numerical criterion, the generally accepted cutoff is 60 years and above. (www.who.int)

The Right to Sight has no age limit

The risk of many vision-impairing conditions increases exponentially in later life. The great majority of blind people live in low-income countries, where older people, and especially older women, face many barriers to getting the eye health care they need.

Yet many age-related blinding conditions can be simply and cheaply treated or cured, and timely intervention can often delay or reduce the effects. The main blinding conditions affecting older people are cataract, refractive error, age-related macular degeneration (AMD) and glaucoma.

Older people are important members of families and communities, but vision loss can make it more difficult to contribute to their full potential. 'Active ageing' helps older people to stay healthy, and healthy eyes help older people to keep active.

A community that loses the contribution of its older people to blindness has been robbed of its vision.



Pre-Operative



Post-Operative

Photo courtesy : HV Desai Eye Hospital, Pune



Low Vision Rehabilitation enables a grandpa to read



ANNEXURE - 2

Key Messages & facts specific to blindness in Aging population:

- **The Right to Sight has no age limit.**
- The world's populations are ageing - don't be robbed of your vision.
- The risk of vision-impairing conditions such as cataract and macular degeneration increases exponentially with increasing age.
- The main blinding conditions affecting older people are cataract, refractive error, age-related macular degeneration (AMD) and glaucoma.
- Cataract is the leading cause of blindness in older people – yet it is curable by a simple, cost-effective operation.
- Glaucoma has blinded 4.5 million people worldwide.
- Due to AMD over 3 million people are without sight.
- 8 million people worldwide are blind due to uncorrected refractive errors. A simple sight test and glasses could restore sight to most of these people.
- 71 % of the world's elderly people live in low-income countries, where they often face barriers to eye health care.
- 'Active ageing' helps older people to stay healthy, and healthy eyes help older people to stay active.
- Vision impairment often contributes to injuries and mortality in older people.
- Timely intervention can delay the effects of age-related blinding conditions.

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