
Introduction

The “World Sight Day” is organized on 2nd Thursday of October every year since 2000. This year it fell on 12th October, 2006. For the past six years, a theme on an important aspect of eye care is selected every year so that the theme gets adequate coverage, and activities are organized at all levels focusing on those themes. Themes for the last six years on the occasion of the “World Sight Day” were as follows:

2000  Identifying and correcting refractive errors in the school children.
2001  Gifts of sight to the aged – IOL.
2002  Providing eye care to the underserved population.
2003  Save Children from Visual Impairment & Blindness.
2004  Improved Community Participation for Eye Care through Public Private -Partnership (New Delhi).
2005  Sight for kids (Hyderabad).

For this year (2006), The international Theme for the “World Sight Day” was Low Vision and the National Theme was “Prevention and Control of Diabetic Retinopathy”.

The main objectives of the celebrations were:

• Awareness on Blindness due to “Diabetic Retinopathy”.
• Community approach to tackle “Diabetes & Diabetic Retinopathy”.
• Enhance the role of NGOs, National & International, and Professional bodies in Diabetic Retinopathy.
• Make aware the role of Physicians in tackling Diabetes Mellitus.
• Low Vision Aids in Diabetic Retinopathy patients.

As done in previous years, following activities were planned and undertaken at the central level and state level: Besides, one unique thing this year was that 600 hundreds districts were advised to observe WSD by allocation of one lakh each with NPCB as the major organizer at national level in association with vision 2020-india

• Press Meet on 9th October /release on the “World Sight Day” highlighting importance of Prevention, Control and Management of Blindness due to Diabetic Retinopathy.
• Broadcasting of Audio spots & Telecasting video spots on Diabetic Retinopathy.
• Panel discussion on Television, Radio with the Technical experts.
• Articles in the Newspapers by Technical experts.
• Special programme on “Kalyani” on Doordarshan.
• WSD celebrations in different parts of the Country (NGOs at state level/district level in association with their SBCS/DBCS)
• National Celebration in Chennai where National and International Organizations, Government Institutions, Professional Bodies participated along with State Programme Officers.

Main Celebrations Launched on 12th October 2006

The team in National Program for Control of Blindness, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India in association with VISION 2020India had planned World Sight Day Celebrations in a grand manner keeping two objectives in its agenda-
1. To give national coverage with public awareness strategies and
2. To have the prominent participation of Union Health Ministers and Politicians.

To design and organize the celebration effectively, it had constituted a national committee that met in Chennai and Delhi and had come out with national, state and district level programs with respective financial allocations. While the final function is about to conclude in Chennai the state level functions were held in different parts of the country on 12th October. This year World Sight Day theme in India was “Diabetic Retinopathy”.

There was a press conference on 9th evening to brief media about World Sight Day as a partnership endeavor by Government of India and Vision 2020 India.

Government of India had also published a nation wide advertisement on World Sight Day on 12th October in all leading daily news papers across the country.

(a) We in VISION 2020-India in N.E.W.S

Many of our VISION 2020-India member organizations celebrated the World Sight Day in their respective areas, in association with their local government partners. What followed was news that flew in on celebrations from our members in different corners of India.

Shikshit Yuva Sewa Samiti, Basti, Uttar Pradesh

Shikshit Yuva Sewa Samiti, Basti, Uttar Pradesh had celebrated the World Sight day on 12th October, and people with disabilities, their parents and guardians, teachers and general public attended the function. On the Previous day i.e. 11th October, Shikshit had conducted awareness programme on Diabetic Retinopathy through pamphlets, audio–video aids and news letters. Congratulations to Shikshit Family on the grand celebration in the most deserving state of UP.
Kutch Vikas Trust, Raidhanpur, Bhuj, Gujarat

Kutch Vikas Trust, Bhuj had observed World Sight Day, 2006 by conducting various awareness programmes to spread the message. Particularly the team from KVT visited several schools in Bhuj town and the surrounding villages to create the awareness on avoidable blindness in general public.

Gomabai Nethralaya & Research Centre, Neemuch, Madhya Pradesh

Gomabai Nethralaya & Research Centre, Neemuch in association with District Blindness Control Society, Sight Savers International, Lions Club, Rotary Club and Neemuch Cantt had celebrated the WSD on 12th October with following activities:

Public Awareness Rally was the highlight with the District Collector Mr. S.B. Singh, IAS who flagged off the rally. 500 students from NCC & NSS cadets were in uniform, holding boards & banners with slogans related to eye donation/eye care.
At the end, the Rally got converted into a huge meeting which was addressed by Chief Medical & Health Officer, Dr. Mittal, President Lions Club Mr. Arvind Chopra, President Rotary Club Mr. Omprakash Kabra & by coordination committee member of Gomabai Nethralaya & Research Centre Sh. Mohanlal Garg. In a the meeting representative from Mahaveer International Branch Chotti Sadri (a town 18 km from Neemuch) Distt. Chittorgarh (Raj.) Mr. Kantilal Dak was honored for his devoted services for the cause of Eye Donations in Chotti Sadri under banner of Mahaveer International.

A free Eye check-up camp for patients in the age group of 40 yrs and above was conducted & diabetic patients were screened at Gomabai Nethralaya & Research Centre premises between 9 AM to 3 PM on 12<sup>th</sup> Oct, 06. Of a total 174 patient screened, 75 patients for cataract surgeries and 4 patients of diabetic retinopathy were identified. Selected Cataract patients were operated free of cost at Gomabai Nethralaya & Research Centre on 18<sup>th</sup> Oct, 06.

**Bollineni Eye Hospital & Research Centre, Dargamitta, Nellore, AP**

**Globe Eye Foundation - Bollineni Eye Hospital and Research Centre**
Nellore commemorated ‘World Sight Day’ at Nellore in association with Lions Club of Nellore, District Blindness Control Society, Nellore and Cipla Foresight. The following activities were conducted on this occasion:

- **Poster Painting Competition** for the school children of Nellore on 8 October 2006 was conducted at Sarada School premises in which 52 children from 16 schools participated. The theme for the Poster Painting competition was ‘Showing the way for healthy living for the people with eye problems’. The winners of the competition were graded and awarded participation certificates that were given away by the local MLA.

- **A Community Screening Camp** was conducted in collaboration with Lions Club of Nellore and DBCS, in which 14 cataract patients were identified and operated at Bollineni Eye Hospital & Research Centre on the occasion.
WSD Awareness Rally on 12th Oct. Bollineni Eye Hospital & Research Centre, Lions Club of Nellore, District Blindness Control Society, Cipla Foresight, Students and teachers of various schools at Nellore participated in the WSD awareness procession that started from Gandhi Statue at 10.00 am and reached the meeting venue ‘Town Hall’ at 11.00 a.m. During the march, participants displayed World Sight Day banners and placards printed with eye health care and awareness slogans on Diabetes & blindness prevention.

Eye Health Seminar at Town Hall
An Eye Health Seminar on World Sight Day was inaugurated at 11.00 a.m. at Town Hall, Nellore. Participants from Globe Eye Foundation – Bollineni Eye Hospital & Research Centre, Lions Club of Nellore, District Blindness Control Society, Cipla Foresight, School children and teachers and general public had participated in the seminar. At the concluding session of the celebrations, Mr. Vivekananda Reddy- Member of Legislative Assembly of Andhra Pradesh, Nellore who was the chief guest along with Mr. Srinivasa Rao, President of Lions Club of Nellore, Dr. Manjulamma, District Program Manager, District Blindness Control Society, Nellore, Dr. N. Sai Murali, Medical Director, Globe Eye Foundation – Bollineni Eye Hospital & Research Centre, Nellore, were on the dais. It was a very successful and grand celebration.
Andhra Pradesh does it differently

State blindness Control Society, AP had organized WSD at Sarojini Devi Eye Hospital Hyderabad.

The State Health Minister Mr. Rossaiah had participated in the celebration and inaugurated screening for prevention of blindness in diabetics and also released some posters and booklets on emerging diseases. On the occasion an action plan to promote 500 Vision Centres at cost of 10 crores nearly by the year 2010 was accepted in principle.

Venu Eye Institute and Research Centre, New Delhi

On the 12th October afternoon Mr. Swamy, ED, VISION 2020-India participated in the World Sight Day function at Venu Eye Institute and Research Centre, New Delhi. On this occasion a group of Visually Impaired and Hearing Impaired persons were felicitated for their adventurous journey from Patiala to New Delhi on Tandem Cycle sponsored by CBM. Dr. Jose, DDG (O) GOI, Dr. GV Rao, ORBIS International and Mr. Rajiv Williams, CBM joined the celebrations.
International Forum on Vision and Development

Mr. PKM Swamy, Executive Director, VISION 2020-India had also participated in the 3rd International Forum on Vision and Development organized jointly by UNESCO and ESSILOR on the occasion of the World Sight Day at India Habitat Centre, New Delhi.

WSD Celebrations end on 19th November 2006, in Chennai


(Dignitaries on the dais)

The celebrations commenced with a World Sight Day Rally on 19th morning. Mrs. Letika Saran, Commissioner of Police and Cine star Sri R. Parthiban and Ms Devyani flagged off the rally which started from Kannagi statue to Gandhi Statue. About 400 students and general public took part in the Rally. At the end of the rally, all assembled at the Image auditorium for the Inaugural Function.

In the inaugural function, Dr. Anbumani Ramadoss, Honorable Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare Government of India, was the chief guest. He was joined by Mrs. Panabaka Lakshmi, Union Minister of State for Health and Family welfare, Thiru KKSSR Ramachandran, Honorable Minister of Health,
In the presence of over 700 delegates from different parts of the country, Dr. Anbumani Ramadoss released “For Your Eyes Only” – a handbook for how to prevent eye injuries and problems. Thiru KKSSR Ramachandran released the “VISION 2020-Tamilnadu state plan” on the occasion. Dr. Anbumani Ramadoss, reiterated in his forty five minute extempore speech India’s commitment to prevent and control avoidable blindness. He commended the strong bonding of public-private partnership to achieve the noble cause and hoped for continuous support of State Governments make the National Programme for Control of Blindness successful.

Dr. Anbumani Ramadoss gave away the Awards to the District Programme Officers and Paramedical Personnel recognizing their contribution and dedication to the elimination of avoidable blindness in the Tamil Nadu State.

After the Inaugural Function, Prof. Dr. K Rajendran, Co-Chairman., Diabetes Association of India gave a Health Talk on “facts about Diabetics”. Dr. V. Velayutham, Director, RIO, Chennai gave his lecture on “Eye & Diabetes” on the occasion. Dr. Mishra, Cardiologist gave talk on “Life style in Diabetes”. All lectures were well informative and fitting to the context.

The function continued till Lunch with a cultural programme being performed by the Blind Children. There was a prize distribution function to give away awards to winners of essay writing and drawing competitions held for school children on the World Sight Day Theme. The event was a great success.
Minister calls for more eye donations

Chennai, Nov 18: Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare Anbumani Ramadoss on Sunday called for more eye donations as the country required over 100,000 eyes annually but received only 25,000 last year.

Delivering the inaugural address at the World Sight Day celebrations here, Ramadoss said that India would certainly achieve the targets of Vision 2020 by 2025.

"According to WHO's Vision 2020, everyone must get sight by 2025. At present, the blindness prevalence rate in India is 1.3 per cent. In the next three years, we aim at reducing this to 0.1 per cent," the Minister said.

He assured that the prevalence rate would definitely reduce with the various programmes in place and the country aimed to reduce the rate even to 0.3 per cent.

"Last year, the government had a target to perform 45 lakh cataract surgeries, but completed 49 lakh surgeries," Ramadoss said.

Similarly, Tamil Nadu had also exceeded its targets of 40 lakh cataract surgeries by performing 61 lakh surgeries, he added.

Ramadoss said that 90 per cent of blindness in the country could be prevented.

"We have screened 3.5 crore school children in the country. Out of this, 7.5 lakh students were found to have eye problems and 3.5 lakh were prescribed spectacles," he said.

"Special training had been given to 1,25 lakh teachers last year. The Centre would give special training to doctors, he added.

"We need to develop partnerships between the medical fields for eye care. For diabetic retinopathy, there has to be coordination with physicians and ophthalmologists and between paediatricians and ophthalmologists for early child age disoders," he said.

"Union Health Minister K.K. Sabharwal said that the government was giving importance to the prevention of blindness.

"Last year, the State had received as many as 4,363 eye donations, which, he said, were very less," he added.