

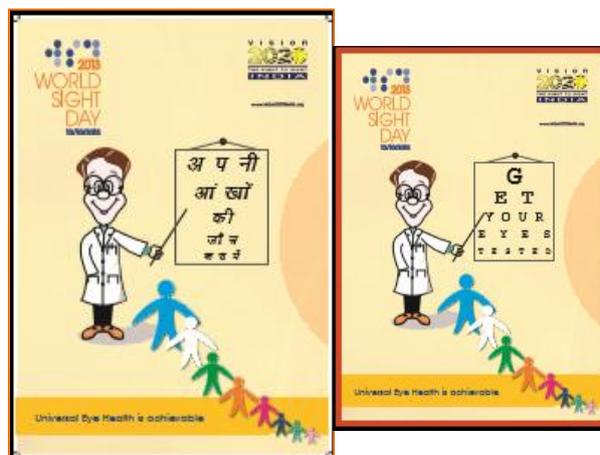


Global theme for WSD 2013 was Universal Eye Health and the call for action:

Get your Eyes Tested

The aim of World Sight Day is two folds: one to raise awareness about eye care and the other is advocacy. And VISION 2020: The Right to Sight – India along with its member organisations was able to generate a nationwide awareness on this day.

As is the practice each year, VISION 2020: The Right to Sight – India Board members observed the World Sight Day (WSD) event with one of its member organisations. However for a national reach on this global awareness day, VISION 2020: The Right to Sight – India suggested activities for their members and especially designed and disseminated WSD to all member organisations. The poster was both in Hindi and English.

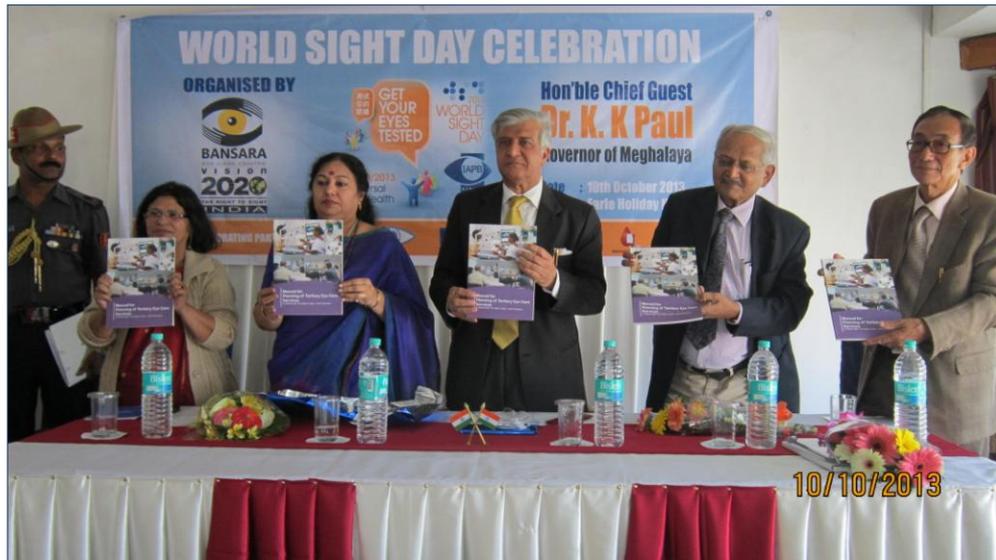


World Sight Day 2013: a focus on eye care in the northeast region

VISION 2020: The Right to Sight – India along with Bansara Eye Care, Shillong, Meghalaya observed the World Sight Day (WSD) 2013 on October 10. The day long programme which commenced with a screening camp and concluded with a technical session was attended by some of the top government officials: right from the Governor of Meghalaya to the State Home Minister and Health Minister: it was an immensely successful platform for advocating and sensitising the government on eye care.

The northeast region was chosen as the venue for the WSD as it is one region in the country where a huge gap on eye care delivery exists. And it has been VISION 2020: The Right to Sight – India’s initiative to highlight the issues in the region to try and resolve them.

Inaugurating the WSD programme, the Chief Guest for the occasion, Governor of Meghalaya, Dr KK Paul suggested that the young population under the age group of 6 years who roughly constitute 20 per cent of the population in the State should be screened under the blindness control programme regularly.



Manual for Planning of Tertiary Eye Care being released at the World Sight Day. From left to right: Dr Jennifer, Ms Sujaya Krishnan, Dr KK Paul, Dr Deshpande and Dr Bamin Tada.

The best medicine is preventive medicine and for the community is better. The Governor emphasised the necessity to reach out to the people and cover the last mile and screen the last man and child in the region.

Towards the goal of a healthy community the Governor said, “I think educating the mother is important.” “Female literacy is of utmost importance. If you are educating a girl you are educating the entire family.”

Speaking on the occasion, the Guest of Honour for the WSD programme, Ms Sujaya Krishnan, Joint Secretary, Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India campaigned for more focus on preventing childhood blindness, where 50 per cent blindness is avoidable. Speaking passionately on



the subject she said, “We are a 30 year old programme (NPCB) and it will be totally criminal if any child has to go blind. Every child needs to be tested; any pre term baby needs to be tested for ROP. Today

there is no excuse for any child to be blind.”

Convergence is the key word to attain our goal said Ms Krishnan urging all health programmes to converge to offer the best possible health care to the society.

Ms Krishnan’s concern stemmed from a growing younger generation in the coming years in India for whom “there can be no compromise on having a disabled generation.” Else we will loosing an entire generation to disability she added.

On this global day of creating awareness on eye care, Ms Krishnan called out to the audience to “rededicate ourselves to universal eye health” and to ensure to “reach the unreached and take eye care to the doorstep.”

Dr Bamin Tada, Advisor, Health, North Eastern Council, Government of India in his address emphasised on the need for health research where the gap is very wide. “Our neighbouring countries, he said “have overtaken us in this area.” Research and survey is a must.

He called out to the Professionals to get out of their comfort zones and reach out to the community.

Dr Tada reminded the audience that the task of eliminating blindness was not insurmountable as “We have eliminated a number of diseases like small pox and our on our way to eliminate polio, blindness should not be far.”

The President of VISION 2020: The Right to Sight – India, Col (retd) Dr Deshpande in his welcome speech said that health should be treated as a fundamental right. He said that cataract was an area where we have done well and also on refractive error, which is a simple problem. But now we have to focus on other problems also like Diabetic Retinopathy (DR) where the numbers were going high.

Dr GV Rao, CEO, VISION 2020: The Right to Sight – India in his vote of thanks applauded the effort by Bansara Eye Care for organising the event so successfully. He further added that eye care in the northeast region was a focus area for VISION 2020: The Right to Sight – India having held a one day meet to discuss the issue and also a technical session at the WSD.



Ms Sujaya Krishnan, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India and Smt Roshan Warjri, Honourable Home Minister, Government of Meghalaya flagging off the screening camp.

The daylong celebrations began with the flagging off of the screening camp by Ms Sujaya Krishnan, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India and Smt Roshan Warjri, Honourable Home Minister, Government of Meghalaya.

The WSD programme concluded with a technical session to bring focus on the gaps in eye care in the region. Ms Sujaya Krishnan who inaugurated the session briefly spoke about the initiatives of NPCB in the region.



Dr Praveen Vashist, HOD, Community Ophthalmology Department, Dr RP Centre, AIIMS speaking at the technical session.

Dr Praveen Vashist, HOD, Community Ophthalmology Department, Dr RP Centre, AIIMS gave a comprehensive presentation of the challenges in eye care delivery in the region. This was a collation of data from the meeting of the VISION 2020: The Right to Sight – India northeast members held recently.

Dr Harsha Bhattacharjee, Medical Director, Sri Sankara Deva Nethralaya, Guwahati made a presentation on 'Status of eye care facilities in north east; Dr Asim Sil, Chief Medical Director, NNN, West Bengal presented about the HR challenge in the region; while Dr SK Goswami spoke about 'Challenges in the prevention of blindness in India'; Dr Rajiv Basaiawmoit brought in a fresh perspective a management professional and presented on 'The Multifold Challenge of Preventable Blindness call for a Multifold Approach'. Dr Santosh Moses brought in their experience in working in the region in his presentation on 'Importance of awareness in eye health seeking behaviour'. The CEO of VISION 2020: The Right to Sight – India concluded the session with the organisation's approach towards quality, comprehensive and equitable eye care.

