



World Sight Day 2009

National Symposium

October 7th 2009

“Gender and eye health – equal access to care”

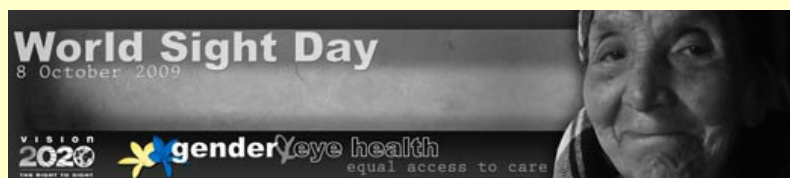


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Vision 2020: The Right to Sight - India



Key facts on eye health

- Approximately **314 million** people worldwide live with low vision and blindness
- Of these, **45 million** people are blind and **269 million** have low vision
- 90% of blind people live in low-income countries



Blindness Scenario in India



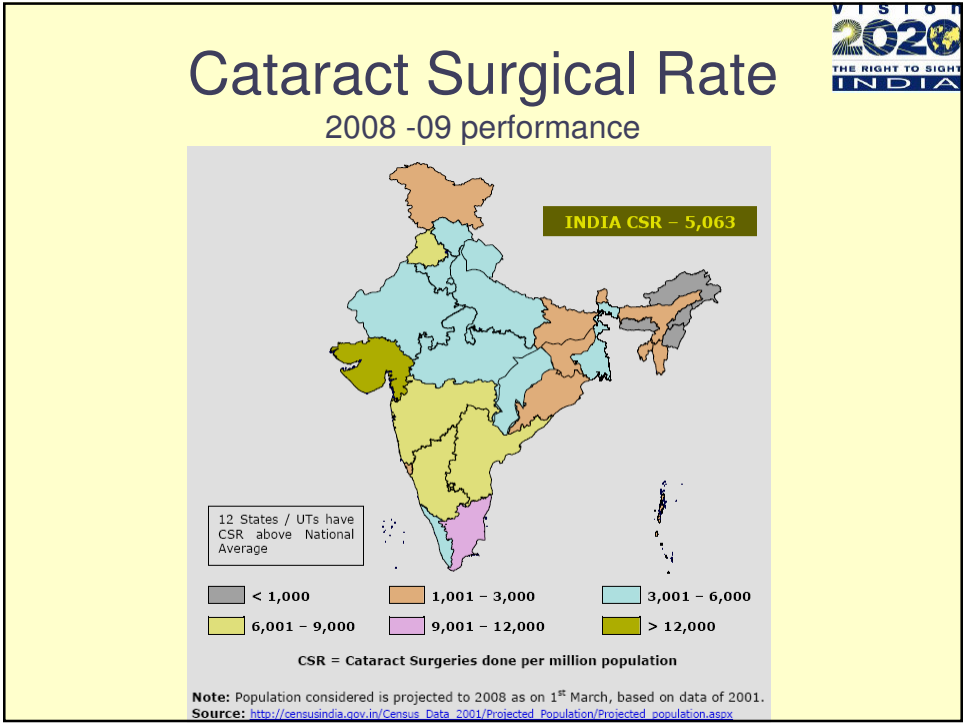
- ✦ India has 12 million blind – the highest globally
- ✦ Every year 2 million go blind, 62% from cataract
- ✦ Prevalence - gender imbalance: 1.6% in females and 1.4% in males
- ✦ Prevalence in rural: 1.63%; Urban: 1.01%
- ✦ State wise high prevalence: Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Bengal
- ✦ National Program for Control of Blindness started in 1976
- ✦ From 1978 to 1993, Danida and from 1995 to 2001, World Bank supported cataract program

State – wise blindness prevalence in India

National Survey (2001 - 02) / Rapid Survey (2003 - 04)

| HIGH PREVALENCE | | MEDIUM PREVALENCE | | LOW PREVALENCE | |
|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| State | Level of Prevalence | State | Level of Prevalence | State | Level of Prevalence |
| Assam | 3.05% | Andhra Pradesh | 1.42% | Maharashtra | 0.95% |
| Arunachal Pradesh | 2.28% | Jharkhand | 1.41% | Uttar Pradesh | 0.94% |
| Haryana | 1.89% | Orissa | 1.40% | Bihar | 0.78% |
| Karnataka | 1.78% | Manipur | 1.38% | Mizoram | 0.78% |
| Chattisgarh | 1.61% | West Bengal | 1.19% | Tamil Nadu | 0.78% |
| Jammu & Kashmir | 1.61% | Madhya Pradesh | 1.16% | Tripura | 0.77% |
| Rajasthan | 1.55% | Delhi | 1.13% | Meghalaya | 0.74% |
| Goa | 1.52% | Gujarat | 1.07% | Himachal Pradesh | 0.70% |
| | | Nagaland | 1.05% | Sikkim | 0.65% |
| | | Punjab | 1.01% | Kerala | 0.56% |

Source: NPCB, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of India



World Sight Day

- To focus on raising awareness on avoidable blindness and visual impairment
- Advocacy event for Vision 2020
- A platform for organizations worldwide to encourage governments, corporations, institutions and individuals to actively support global blindness prevention efforts



World Sight Day
8 October 2009

VISION 2020 THE RIGHT TO SIGHT INDIA

gender^{eye} health
equal access to care

“Gender and eye health – equal access to care”

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Gender and eye health

In the British Journal of Ophthalmology it was estimated last year that,

“blindness and severe visual impairment from cataract could be reduced by around 11% in low- and middle-income countries if women were to receive cataract surgery at the same rate as men (British Journal of Ophthalmology, Dec 2008; doi:10.1136/bjo.2008.140301).”



Gender and eye health contd....

- Women face a significantly greater risk of vision loss than men



Gender and eye health contd...

- 80% of blindness is avoidable – i.e. readily treatable and/or preventable



Gender and eye health contd...

- Limited access to health services: women are at an increased risk



Gender and eye health contd...

- To achieve equal coverage, women should account for around 60-65% of all cataract surgical cases



Higher prevalence of blindness among women: Why?

- Greater life spans of women → greater burden of degenerative blindness. YES, but more women are blind at *all* ages. Must be another explanation.
- Differential mortality among blind men/women? NO.

Higher prevalence of blindness among women: Why?

- Most likely explanation?
**Differential use of eye-care services
due to differences in gender roles and
behaviours.**

So

One of the quickest ways to reduce overall levels of blindness, and thus move toward Vision 2020 goals, may be to **increase women's access to and utilization of eye-care services** -- through projects that address the **gender realities of the intervention areas.**



How do factors such as access to & control over resources influence health of women / men ?

We need to ask:

- *Who uses what, the availability of services, ease in which services can be used, and response of the service to meet needs (access) ?*
- *Who decides who can use the resources (control, gender norms) ?*

Contd....

Examples of how access and control over resources influence health

- increased education helps women to gain status and secure greater decision-making power in the family and the wider community
- Women do not usually access treatment for cataract because they do not control financial resources. In addition, the cost for cataract surgery is high and besides it is difficult for them to travel.
- Transport, money for services, child care, and long queues may all create barriers.

OH2.1.3.4

Key messages for WSD 2009

- Two-thirds of blind people worldwide are women & girls
- In many countries, men's access to eye care is twice that of women



Key stakeholders in NPCB

- **VISION 20-20** The right to sight - Umbrella Organization with 75 member organizations (as on Sept, 2009), NPCB, GOI as a Special Invitee
- **International Non Governmental Organizations**
 - cbm, Germany
 - Sightsavers International, United Kingdom
 - ORBIS International, USA
 - Operation Eyesight Universal (OEU), Canada
 - Seva Foundation, USA
 - Lion Clubs International Foundation (LCIF), USA
- **National Non – Governmental Organizations**
 - More than 800 NGOs working with NPCB Programme
 - Dr. Rajendra Prasad Institute for Ophthalmic Sciences, AIIMS, New Delhi
 - Regional Institutes of Ophthalmology
 - Medical Colleges, Districts Hospitals.
 - Sentinel Surveillance Units

Thank you

