

# World report on vision



World Health  
Organization



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## **Foreword**

In a world built on the ability to see, vision, the most dominant of our senses, is vital at every turn of our lives. The newborn depends on vision to recognize and bond with its mother; the toddler, to master balance and learn to walk; the schoolboy, to walk to school, read and learn; the young woman to participate in the workforce; and the older woman, to maintain her independence.

Yet, as this report shows, eye conditions and vision impairment are widespread, and far too often they still go untreated. Globally, *at least* 2.2 billion people have a vision impairment, and of these, at least 1 billion people have a vision impairment that could have been prevented or is yet to be addressed.

As usual, this burden is not borne equally. It weighs more heavily on low- and middle-income countries, on older people, and on rural communities. Most worrying is that projections show that global demand for eye care is set to surge in the coming years due to population growth, ageing, and changes in lifestyle.

Clearly, we have no choice but to take on this challenge. It is time to make sure that as many people as possible in all countries can see as well as current health technologies and health systems allow.

But it is important to recognize and build on the many successes in eye care of the last decades. One such success has been the WHO-endorsed SAFE strategy for trachoma elimination. Implemented in over 30 countries, it has so far resulted in eight countries eliminating trachoma as a public health problem. Other examples include public–private partnerships to provide spectacles in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and South Africa.

The *World report on vision* sets out concrete proposals to address challenges in eye care. The key proposal is to make integrated people-centred eye care, embedded in health systems and based on strong primary health care, the care model of choice and scale it up widely.

People who need eye care must be able to receive high-quality interventions without suffering financial hardship. Including eye care in national health plans and essential packages of care is an important part of every country's journey towards universal health coverage.

WHO is committed to working with countries to improve the delivery of eye care, in particular through primary health care; to improving health information systems for eye care; and to strengthening the eye care workforce –three enabling factors for implementing integrated people-centred eye care.

But WHO cannot achieve this task alone. International organizations, donors, and the public and private sectors must work together to provide the long-term investment and management capacity to scale up integrated people-centred eye care.

Our hope is that, building on past efforts, we can successfully take on this challenge and help countries prevent eye conditions and vision impairment more effectively and provide quality eye care services according to the needs of their populations.

**Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus**

Director-General

World Health Organization

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