

Prevention of Blindness and Deafness News

An updated action plan for the prevention of avoidable blindness and visual impairment ...

A meeting of the 130th Executive Board was held in January 2012. A report updating Member States on the progress of the action plan for the prevention of avoidable blindness and visual impairment was discussed by the Executive Board. The Board has now asked the WHO Secretariat to update the action plan in consultation with Member States and international partners for 2014 to 2019. An initial web-based consultation open to Member States and international partners concluded on 16 March 2012. The results of this will contribute to a discussion paper which is currently being drafted by the Secretariat. The discussion paper will then be posted online and will enable Member States and international partners to further reflect on what should go into the 2013-2019 action plan. This will then be followed by the development of a first draft of the updated plan for sharing with Member States and other partners. The relevant papers submitted to the January 2012 Executive Board can be found at: http://apps.who.int/gb/e/e_eb130.html

At the end of March, WHO has been asked by the IAPB to join their board meeting. This will provide an opportunity for WHO to hear the views of international partners on what they think should go into the updated action plan.

Working in partnership...

Working in partnership is one of the objectives under the 2009-2013 action plan. The Secretariat is currently working with Member States and international partners to prepare for the next Global Alliance for the elimination of blinding trachoma annual meeting (GET2020). This will be held in May, in AMRO, Washington, DC.

Earlier this month, WHO attended a 3-day workshop in Chad to assist the country to develop a national plan to eliminate blinding trachoma. The workshop, hosted by the MoH, was supported by a number of NGOs. WHO will now work with the MoH to help them finalize this plan and will do this alongside its broader commitment for tackling Neglected Tropical Diseases.

Between 30 January and 1 February, The Kilimanjaro Centre for Community Ophthalmology and WHO co-hosted (with support from the Lions SightFirst and Fred Hollows Foundation) a Global Trichiasis Scientific Meeting in Moshi, Tanzania. The meeting brought together national coordinators, NGO representatives, researchers and others to review the existing evidence on tackling trichomatous trichiasis in order to strengthen policies, and programmes. Findings will be presented at the May GET 2020 meeting.

Working with onchocerciasis partners continues to be an important part of our work. In March, the focus of the 39th session of the NGDO Coordination Group for Onchocerciasis Control in Burkina Faso was on strengthening cross-border collaboration and in-country partnership, especially in Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Nigeria.

The 34th session of the Technical Consultative Committee of APOC was also held in March in Burkina Faso. In addition to several technical and strategic issues as well as review of new plans of action, annual technical reports and operational research proposals, the Committee discussed with WHO the opportunities for improving collaboration between onchocerciasis and lymphatic filariasis programmes.

WHO together with the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness, the Pan American Association of Ophthalmology and the main stakeholders in the region developed a VISION 2020 Latin America Strategic Plan in Lima, Peru between 28 February and 3 March.

Research...

Another objective of the current action plan is to promote research. As part of this WHO convened a meeting in Guangzhou, China, between 19-21 March to review the results of a multi-country study (China, India, Nepal, Niger, South Africa and USA) to assess the prevalence of near vision impairment. Following the meeting the results of the research, funded by the National Eye Institute (part of the National Institutes of Health, US), will be written up for peer-review.

Chronic Eye Diseases...

In February, WHO joined a Middle East African Council of Ophthalmology expert meeting to discuss developing a diabetic retinopathy grading card for use by family physicians. The meeting agreed that Kind Saud University will develop the grading card and will conduct a pilot study in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

An "evidence on cataract in Africa" meeting was held in Moshi, Tanzania on 3 and 4 February. The meeting reviewed the prevalence of cataract, surgical coverage, surgical outcome and what cataract surgical rates should be. The meeting was sponsored by the Fred Hollows Foundation. The findings of the meeting were then shared at the World Ophthalmology Congress.

WHO joined the World Ophthalmology Congress, which this year was held in Abu Dhabi between 16 and 20 February 2012. The Congress was hosted by the Middle East African Council of Ophthalmology and was the first time such a large international ophthalmology meeting had been hosted in the region. A number of National Coordinators for eye care in ministries of health participated.

National Action Plans...

Afghanistan: During February and March, WHO and Fred Hollows Foundation hosted a meeting in Lahore, Pakistan to develop a prevention of avoidable blindness action plan for Afghanistan and to strengthen training and service delivery in the country. WHO and a range of partners agreed to support the Afghanistan MoH in delivering and then monitoring and evaluating the plan.

Mongolia: The MoH is conducting a workshop in March to develop a new five-year national action plan for the prevention of avoidable blindness. The workshop will be supported by the WPRO office.

Guyana: In March the MoH presented the results of the eye care national situation assessment, which had been conducted with the support of WHO. The results of the assessment will be used to review the national plan of action in a workshop in July 2012.

Jamaica: The MoH and Western Regional Health Authority of Jamaica and other stakeholders conducted a workshop in March to develop a plan of action on Diabetic Retinopathy.

Philippines: The MoH, in collaboration with the National Committee for Sight Preservation and other stakeholders is conducting a workshop in March to develop a new national action plan for prevention of avoidable blindness.

Re-establishing the Programme for Prevention of Deafness and Hearing Impairment ...

The WHO HQ technical officer for deafness has now been in place for three months. A programme outline has been developed and shared with selected ministries of health and international partners. The main activity for this biennium is to promote primary ear and hearing care as an integral part of primary health care at country level.

Bangladesh: ear and hearing check-up, hearing testing, community-based screening activities and awareness campaigns were held in Dhaka as well as the rural areas of Bangladesh.



China: the theme for 3 March 2012 was "Reduce Noise, Protect Hearing". Large public consultations, free hearing screening, press conferences, and multiple media announcements were held.

India: community-based activities were carried out in the city of Delhi. These included a poster exhibition on ear and hearing, a public skit, health talks, and a community quiz on ear and hearing care.





Indonesia: the National Committee for Prevention of Hearing Impairment and the Provincial Committees celebrated the day in the different provinces. Radio broadcasts, ear and hearing screening activities and awareness campaigns were held.

Forthcoming meetings...

- Workshop to develop an essential package of eye health interventions for primary care. Nairobi, Kenya, 28-30 March. The workshop will bring together experts from WHO, Ministries of Health, NGOs and academic.
- 136th session of the Committee of Sponsoring Agencies of APOC, 3-5 April 2012, Atlanta, USA.
- The second Regional program managers meeting on Trachoma elimination of the Americas, Guatemala, 16-18 April 2012
- Workshop on public health control of glaucoma visual loss in Africa, 17-18 April 2012, Kampala, Uganda.
- Stakeholders' meeting to support the national action plan for the elimination of onchocerciasis in Yemen, April 2012, Cairo, Egypt.
- 16th Meeting of the WHO Alliance for the Global Elimination of Blinding Trachoma by the year 2020 (GET 2020), 14-16 May 2012, Washington DC, USA.

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