

Prevention of Blindness and Deafness News

Universal access to eye health: a global action plan, 2014-2019...

Member States, international partners and WHO continue to progress in developing the global action plan for the prevention of avoidable blindness, 2014-2019.

The zero draft was published on 31 August on the WHO web site. The feedback received through the web-based consultation alongside issues raised at an informal consultation with Member States, UN entities and international partners on 8 October, will now be used to develop a further draft for the January 2013 Executive Board. In finalizing the draft, there was a request at the 8 October meeting for a follow-up informal consultation to discuss targets that should be adopted in the action plan. This will be held on 31 October.

The Fifty-ninth session of the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean agreed a resolution supporting the zero draft (link available [here](#)).

In addition to being mentioned in the draft action plan for the prevention of blindness, the elimination of trachoma and onchocerciasis are also included in a draft resolution on the Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) Road Map which will be presented at the next WHA. Trachoma was also included in resolution regarding the 2012 -2016 regional action plan for NTDs in the Western Pacific at the Western Pacific Regional Committee at the end of September (link available [here](#)).

Taking forward prevention of blindness at the national level...

July 2012, Republic of Yemen: WHO and the Minister of Public Health and Population, Yemen, along with partners has developed a plan to implement the outreach activity for conducting 2000 free cataract surgeries to reduce blindness in Yemen. This activity started in the Governorate of Taiz and in the process to cover the Governorates of Amran, Abyan, Haja, and Hodeida. Gradually it will cover all Governorates in Yemen.



9-10 July, Guyana: National workshop to elaborate a new national eye care plan.

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16-18 July, Philippines: A WHO planning meeting for trachoma prevalence survey needs in the Mekong countries was held at the WPRO office in Manila and was attended by national trachoma programme coordinators from Lao PDR, Viet Nam and Cambodia.

23-27 July, Venezuela: National workshop to elaborate new national eye care plan.

27-30 August, Solomon Islands: During the annual conference, eye care personnel from across the country reported on their work during the last year and discussed future strategies. The focus of the meeting was on the integration of primary eye care into primary health care. The meeting was attended and supported by WHO Countries and Regional Offices.

5-7 September, Lao PDR: National planning workshop to review and update the National Prevention of Blindness Action Plan. The workshop was attended by MoH, WHO and NGOs's including the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness.

6-7 September, Colombia: Low vision national workshop supported by Catedra UNESCO.

13 September, El Salvador: The Minister of Health signed resolution 185 of 2012 in support of the VISION 2020 National Committee activities.

15-30 September 2012, Somalia: WHO, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, and Manhal Charity Organization, conducted a free eye campaign at the National Eye Center, Mogadishu, Somalia. This campaign is funded by IHH Human Right, Freedom and Humanitarian Relief. The total number of patients treated was 2,660, among which 960 patients were operated.



Working in partnership ...

17-20 September 2012, Hyderabad, India: IX IAPB General Assembly. A number of WHO staff from headquarters and regional offices participated in the meeting. Among other areas, WHO presented on the draft action plan for the prevention of avoidable blindness, monitoring of cataract surgical services, linkages between prevention of blindness and prevention of deafness programmes, and a description on global efforts in the control of onchocerciasis.

The August issue on *Archives of Ophthalmology* reported an international collaborative study of which WHO is part of. Its conclusion was that age structure has a major effect on the number of cataract surgeries needed in different countries of Latin America, and it is essential to consider this when planning cataract surgical services. Potential differences in non-age-related risk factors for cataract among different populations also deserve further study.

Forthcoming events...

6-27 October, Colombia: Low Vision workshop to design the Colombia Ministry of Health National strategy on Low Vision.

6-8 November, Honduras: Development of the VISION 2020 National Strategy.

3-8 December, Panama: RAAB training program for facilitators and initiation of RAAB. Supported by IAPB and ORBIS.

10-13 December, Guyana: Annual Caribbean regional meeting for national committees. Supported by CCB-SSI and EC.

Prevention of Deafness

24-29 September, Every year the last full week of September is designated as the 'Week of the Deaf,' by the World Federation of the Deaf. This day is observed by deaf communities across the world and serves to raise awareness within communities and policy-makers. This year, the theme for the week was '*Sign bilingualism is a human right.*' Details can be accessed at the WHO PBD site <http://www.who.int/pbd/deafness/en/>.

A factsheet on 'strengthening ear and hearing care in community-based rehabilitation (CBR) programmes' is under development and expected to be completed shortly. The factsheet is being developed through consultation with a group of experts. The factsheet will serve as a tool for integration of ear and hearing care into existing CBR programmes.

Taking forward prevention of deafness at the national level...

11-13 September, Sri Lanka: Meeting of the Society for Sound Hearing (SSH). SSH is an international organization active in the South-East Asia region and working in close collaboration with the WHO regional office for South-East Asia. A symposium on 'comprehensive planning of HRD in ear and hearing care to meet the goals of Sound Hearing 2030' was organized by SSH. It was attended by representatives of 8 of the eleven Member States from the region. It served to identify the gaps in human resources and need for regional cooperation to support development of audiological and otological resources in countries of the South-East Asia region.

The National Programme for Prevention of Hearing Impairment and Deafness was launched in Sri Lanka on 11 September 2012, by the Deputy Minister of Health,

of Sri Lanka. Four districts have been identified for the implementation of the pilot phase of the programme. The programme is being developed through cooperation between the Ministry of Health of Sri Lanka, WHO country Office and headquarters as well as the Hearing Conservation Council, a UK-based NGO.



A lunchtime seminar on 'Living with hearing loss in LMICs: options and challenges' will be held at the WHO headquarters in Geneva on 9 November 2012. Mr Colin Allen, President, World Federation of the Deaf and Ms Sally Harvest will speak at the seminar.

Forthcoming meetings...

November/December 2012, Guinea Conakry: Workshop for development of ear and hearing care strategy.

26-28 November 2012, India: 1st Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) World Congress.

CONTACTS LIST

For HQ : WHOPBD@who.int

For AFRO: Dr Sambo, email: sambob@afro.who.int

For AMRO: Dr Silva, email: juasilva@who.int

For EMRO: Dr Choudhury, email: CPB@emro.who.int

For SEARO: Dr Garg, email: gargr@who.int

For WPRO: Dr Mueller, email: muellera@wpro.who.int