



**Empathy and not pity or sympathy
We want to contribute to the nation's
development**
was the message on
World Sight Day from students with visual impairment

“We do not want pity but empathy and support and collaboration from the society” was the refrain from all the three students with visual impairment who shared their aspirations and a message to the nation at the World Sight Day (WSD) celebrations organised by VISION 2020: The Right to Sight – India at Delhi on 9th October, 2014.



VISION 2020: The Right to Sight – India with support from the National Programme for Control of Blindness, Government of India organised a programme to mark the World Sight Day on 9th October 2014 at the Constitution Club, New Delhi. The NPCB, MoHFW approved Rs.480,000 to VISION 2020 India to observe the day.

The global theme for WSD this year was ‘No More Avoidable Blindness’. At the national level, the focus of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India was on Diabetic Retinopathy.



The two and half hour programme held at the Constitution Club Annexe, New Delhi programme included a panel discussion on: **Reaching 0.3% blindness prevalence by 2020: Reflections and Future Strategies** with an eminent panel representing all the stakeholders. The government was represented by Dr NK Agarwal, DDG(O), NPCB, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India; the NGO sector by Dr Sara Varughese, President, VISION 2020: The Right to Sight – India; private sector by Dr AK Grover, Head, Ophthalmology Department, Sri Ganga Ram Hospital, and the corporate sector by Mr Jayanth Bhuvanaraghan, Chief Corporate Mission Officer, Essilor.

Students from All India Confederation for the Blind and National Association for the Blind, who rendered the welcome song and three of the students with visual impairment, shared their aspirations and a message to the nation.

Two films – one on the barriers of accessibility and affordability – a case study of Vivekananda Mission Ashram hospital, Haldia, West Bengal. The second film was promoting eye donation made by a group of advertising professionals for Eye Bank Association of India (EBAI) were screened during the programme to sensitise the public towards the hurdles for providing eye care.

Dr Sara Varughese, President, VISION 2020 - India in her welcome address discussed the World Health Organization Global Action Plan (GAP 2014-19) and said that this can be implemented in the Indian context.

In his key note address for the panel discussion, Col Deshpande spoke about the 'need for the strengthening of health system for blindness prevention activity'. In his address, he examined the eye care programs in the context of health systems outlining that traditionally eye care has been established as an entity separate from the rest of health care, although at VISION 2020 - India strategy has extensively promoted the integration of eye care services into health care.

TESTIMONIALS BY STUDENTS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

The highlight of the two and half hour programme was the message that three students from Blind School shared with the audience. The one common message that they had

was that they don't want pity but empathy, support. They all aspire to be part of the development of the country and also contribute towards it.



Komal Sharma from AICB speaking at the World Sight Day

Komal Sharma, student from All India Confederation for the Blind (AICB), Captain Chandan Lal Special School for the Blind shared her anguish that the society harbours a number of misconceptions about persons with disability that they want pity. Reading from the Braille script she had prepared, Komal said that in villages the life of the person with visual impairment is very difficult. "They are insulted. Even parents treat their children differently favouring the one with sight". "We also want to contribute towards *swach* and *samiridh* Bharat".

Kanta Prasad student from All India Confederation for the Blind (AICB), Captain Chandan Lal Special School for the Blind a student from the same school shared his dream of becoming a teacher. He felt that he was fortunate to be in a school in a city like Delhi where visually impaired get a number of opportunities. He was saddened for his friends in his village facing similar challenges as "as in the village life is very difficult life for anyone with disability". Kanta appealed to the organisations working in the field to "create awareness about preventing blindness and better facilities for the visually challenged in the villages".



Kanta Prasad from AICB speaking at the World Sight Day programme



Prince Singh from NAB speaking at the World Sight Day

Prince Singh a teenager student from National Association for the Blind shared his experience of how he lost his sight and expressed thanks to NAB that he was able to be mainstreamed in the normal education and progressed so far.

Prince said that with the support from NAB and his own determination he has made himself capable to compete with any normal children and he urged his other brethren in similar situation to take courage and make themselves capable. His request to the society was also "we don't want sympathy but empathy" and his ambition to be one with the progress in the society.

PANEL DISCUSSION

The panel discussion on **Reaching 0.3% blindness prevalence by 2020: Reflections and Future Strategies** was chaired by Col M Deshpande, Medical Director, HV Desai Eye Hospital.

The panellist were: Dr Sara Varughese, President, VISION 2020: The Right to Sight – India; Dr AK Grover, Head, Ophthalmology Department, Ganga Ram Hospital and the corporate by Mr Jayanth Bhuvanaraghan, Chief Corporate Mission Officer, Essilor.

Dr Sara Varughese in her presentation emphasised the role of the civil society in eliminating avoidable blindness while Dr AK Grover argued that it is quite possible to reach 0.3% blindness prevalence by 2020 by strengthening the human resource at all level and also focussing on upgrading the medical courses.

Dr NK Agarwal outlined the role of NPCB – what it had achieved so far and what its strategies are towards reaching 0.3% blindness prevalence by 2020.

Nearly 175 from eye hospitals in Delhi, optometry students, NPCB officials from MoHFW, CBM partners from Mathura, students from schools for visually impaired, eminent eye doctors and VISION 2020 – India Board members participated in the WSD 2014.

Although, Hon'ble Union Minister, MoHFW has confirmed his participation, he could not join the program due to certain very important priorities.



AWARENESS THROUGH FM RADIO

Towards promoting the behaviour in order to have a regular eye check and to educate the common man on some of the major causes of avoidable blindness, VISION 2020 used the FM Radio medium to reach out to Delhi population of approx. 1.8 crores. Various messages focussing on DR, Glaucoma, Cataract, and Refractive Error were broadcast through Radio City and AIR FM (Gold and Rainbow) throughout the day on 9 October. Some messages were of 30 sec and some were of 60 sec, in addition to the mention by Radio Jockey.

INNOVATION EXCELLENCE REWARD

Towards promoting innovation which is the need of the hour in eye care program, VISION 2020 India announced an innovation excellence reward for its member institutions on competitive basis. This reward carried a cash of Rs.50,000/- and was sponsored by Mukta Opticians, Goa.

The aim was to promote innovation in the overall framework of achieving universal eye health. We received a good response from our partner organisations. A two member selection team of Dr Damodar Bachani, Deputy Commissioner (NCD), Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India and Mr B V Tejah, Communications Manager, International Agency for Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) - screened all the applications and after discussions and deliberations selected the award winning innovative idea.

The award winning Innovative Excellent idea is: "to live up to the theme of this year's World Sight Day- No More Avoidable Blindness by conducting a public celebration event to **declare a village blindness free** on this World Sight Day!" Operation Eyesight Universal implemented this scheme in collaboration with its partner St. Gregorios Balagram Eye Hospital, Yacharam.

We hope that this innovative idea and model can be replicated to achieve the goal of eliminating avoidable visual impairment by year 2020.

World Sight Day 9th October 2014

Agenda

Venue: Constitution Club of India, Rafi Marg, New Delhi
Time: 16:00 to 18:30 hrs

Time	Agenda Item	Facilitator/Resource Person
16:00 – 16:05	Invite	Sridevi Sunderarajan VISION 2020 India
16:05 – 16:10	Prayer	Students from AICB
16:10 – 16:15	Welcome Remark	Phanindra B. Nukella CEO, VISION 2020 India
16:15 – 16:20	Address by President VISION 2020 India	Dr. Sara Varughese President, VISION 2020 India
16:20 – 16:25	Address by DDG (O) MoHFW	Dr NK Agarwal DDG (O), MoHFW
16:25 – 16:35	Two films screening 1. Reaching to poor population 2. Eye Donation	Sridevi Sunderarajan VISION 2020 India
16:35 – 16:45	Testimonials of persons living with visual impairment	Mrinal Madhaw VISION 2020 India
16:45 – 16:55	FM Radio Clippings	Sridevi Sunderarajan VISION 2020 India
17:00 – 18:00 [10 mins for each panel member , followed discussion/Q&A for 20 mins]		
<u>Panel Discussion</u>		
Reaching 0.3% blindness prevalence by 2020: Reflections and Future Strategies		
Keynote Address: Col (retd)Dr M Deshpande, HV Desai Eye Hospital		
Panellists:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Government: Dr NK Agarwal, DDG (O), MoHFW 2. Civil Society: Dr. Sara Varughese, President, VISION 2020 India 3. Private Sector: Dr. AK Grover, Sri Ganga Ram Hospital 4. Corporate: Mr. Jayanth Bhuvanaraghan, Chief Corporate Mission Officer, Essilor 		

18:00	Address by Chief Guest	Dr. Harsh Vardhan Hon'ble Union Minister, MoHFW, Govt. of India
	VOTE OF THANKS Please join us for Hi-Tea	Shri Govind Hari Board Member, VISION 2020 India
