

# World Sight Day 2009

What is needed to support blindness prevention under the VISION 2020 initiative?

Strong political and financial support for gender responsive eye health care and blindness prevention programmes from governments, policy-makers and donors.



## Partners

Alexandria Chamber of Commerce, Arab Medical Union, Bibliotheca Alexandrina (Library of Alexandria), Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services, Egyptian Association for the Prevention of Blindness, Egyptian Ophthalmological Society, International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness, Lions Club International Foundation, Ministry of Health, Egypt, Al-Noor Magrabi Foundation, Rotary International, Suzanne Mubarak Center

World Sight Day is an international day of awareness, held annually on the second Thursday of October to focus attention on the global issue of avoidable blindness and visual impairment.



**gender eye health**  
equal access to care



## Key messages for World Sight Day 2009

- Nearly two-thirds of blind people worldwide are women and girls.
- In many developing countries, women are less likely to receive eye care services than men.
- Equal access to eye care could substantially reduce blindness in poor countries.
- VISION 2020 programmes employ strategies that effectively address the gender inequity.

For further information, please contact us at:

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### Facts on the burden of blindness

#### In the world

- Every 5 seconds one person in the world goes blind.
- Every minute a child goes blind.
- 90% of blind people live in developing countries.
- Without proper interventions, the number of blind will increase to 75 million by the year 2020.
- Cataract is the leading cause of blindness – yet it is curable by a simple, cost-effective operation.
- 8 million people worldwide are blind due to uncorrected refractive errors. A simple sight test and glasses could restore sight to most of these people.
- Restoration of sight is one of the most cost effective interventions in health care.

#### In the Eastern Mediterranean Region

- Around 37 million people are visually impaired, among whom 5.3 million are blind.

#### In Egypt

- An estimated 800 000 people are blind.

## VISION 2020

The Right to Sight

Vision 2020, a global initiative of the World Health Organization and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness, aims to strengthen national eye health care systems and facilitate national capacity-building to eliminate avoidable blindness by the year 2020.



### Facts on gender and eye health

- Women face a significantly greater risk of vision loss than men.
- The number of women needing surgery for cataract is about 1.4 times higher than the number of men.
- Almost two-thirds of the world's cases of trichiasis (blindness due to trachoma) are among women.

### Priorities of World Sight Day 2009 and the VISION 2020 initiative

- Increase awareness, within key audiences, of the causes of avoidable blindness and the solutions to the problem
- Solicit active community participation
- Improve the quality of services and visual outcomes
- Achieve gender equity in the use of eye care services and service outcomes

### Economic burden of blindness

Blindness has human and socioeconomic consequences in all societies. The costs of low productivity, rehabilitation and education of the blind are a significant economic burden, particularly in developing countries.

80% of blindness is avoidable  
(treatable and/or preventable)

Restoration of sight by cataract surgery  
costs around US\$ 50 per patient