



International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness

WHO 152nd session of Executive Board

30 Jan-7 Feb 2023

Meeting:

152nd EB Constituency Statements

Agenda Item:

16. Social determinants of health (EB152/22)

Statement:

This statement is delivered by International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness on behalf of:

1. CBM Christoffel Blinden Mission Christian Blind Mission
2. Organization for Prevention of Blindness (OPC)
3. Sightsavers/ The Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind
4. The Fred Hollows Foundation
5. World Blind Union, and
6. World Council of Optometry

The global eye care sector welcomes the development of a World Report on addressing the social determinants of health and health inequities and the progress made thus far as outlined in the Report by the Director-General.

1.1 billion people around the world live with the consequences of vision loss because they do not have access to eye care services. 90% of avoidable vision loss is experienced by the poorest and most marginalized groups in low- and middle-income countries. This in itself speaks to a huge inequity in accessing services that would allow avoidable sight loss to be eliminated.

Blindness and vision loss can be viewed a result of inequity in social determinants and as a cause of these inequities. Disparities in social and environmental factors have a significant role in eye health and inequity in eye care. Vision loss and eye care utilization are affected by each of the five core domains of social determinants of health; research has shown that people reporting visual difficulties are more likely to have lower education levels, economic instability, and food insecurity. There also remains a distinct inequity in access to eye care both within and between countries exacerbating the inequality in eye care.

Yet there remains a gap between understanding the role of social determinants in eye health and the ability to address these needs across all levels of the health system.



We, on behalf of the global eye care sector, call on member states to:

- Prioritize eye health across national agendas, plans and policies to strengthen political commitment and funding to eliminate the social determinants and modifiable differences in eye care that affect marginalized or excluded groups.
- Include, within the operational framework of the upcoming World Report, disaggregation to ensure that when addressing the social determinants of health, that no one is left behind.
- Integrate social care with eye health care delivery, including promoting awareness of social needs and developing actions to address them at the individual, community, and national level.