



Focus on

Child Eye Health

Foreword

Child eye health is an important aspect of the provision of comprehensive eye health; and school eye health programmes are an integral part of that.

As we build momentum towards the [2030 In Sight Strategy](#), it's even more imperative that we remind ourselves of the impact of child eye health on not just a global but to individuals.

The Sustainable Development Goals provide us with a framework to better understand how embedding comprehensive school eye health programmes will take us a step closer to attaining three of the goals.

Quality education (SDG 4) gives us a very direct reason as to why comprehensive school eye health programmes should be implemented. We need to remind ourselves of the role that providing quality education can have on the society.

However, Good Health and Well-being (SDG 3) and Gender Equality (SDG 5) are both intrinsically related for a child. When a child has poor vision, their ability to socialise, interact with their peers and feel confident is also impacted. When girls are not at school or are forced into early marriage, they are already at a disadvantage, and are not able to achieve their maximum potential.

As a sector we have made great strides in creating awareness amongst ourselves and we have built up the expertise to implement evidence-based programmes. We now need to take this beyond our sector and think about how we achieve not only (eye) health goals but also education objectives.

The Covid-19 pandemic taught us that all systems are interconnected and that is true of the eye health system too. Education and (eye) health are a part of this system and a holistic approach is required to achieve the 'understanding of education as a human right, a public endeavour, and a common good'.

The Lancet Commission and the [World Report on Vision](#) both highlighted that improving eye health for children can have a profound impact on their education and quality of life. And by integrating evidence-based eye care services for children we can increase the opportunities for children to access the appropriate treatments at the right time.

[Focus on Child Eye Health](#) gave us an opportunity to bring these learnings and use them to advocate both within and outside our sector for better child and school eye health services.



Priya Morjaria

Head of Global Programme Design, Peek Vision and Co-Chair School Eye Health Work Group, IAPB

Overview

'Focus on' is IAPB's in-depth series looking into specific issues in eye health including eye conditions and related areas of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

In 2022, we delivered [Focus on Child Eye Health](#), engaging some of the world's best and brightest thought leaders throughout the year to share knowledge, inspire action, discuss ideas, and push Child Eye Health to the forefront of pressing development issues.

Focus on Child Eye Health was supported by **CooperVision** and explored solutions and actions to ensure that vision impairment in children is no longer overlooked on the list of public health priorities. We were also supported by the IAPB School Eye Health Working Group and members to help deliver the project.

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Discussing a topic so close to our hearts under a team of eminent panel members, and great moderation was immensely satisfying! Really loved being a part of the event and gained a lot of inspiration and information!”

Jameel Rizwana Hussaindeen, Panelist

The [2030 In Sight strategy](#) seeks to end avoidable sight loss and make eye care and rehabilitation services accessible, inclusive, and affordable to everyone, everywhere, whenever they are needed. The project aimed to bring forth the priorities for child eye health in the next decade; elevating child eye health into the education system through school health programs, integrating child eye health in broader health systems, empowering parents and children to better understand and advocate for their own eye health and activating markets to provide accessible, affordable, appropriate specs to children.

Child Eye Health is a key area to achieve the 2030 In Sight strategy and will be an continued focus of IAPB's campaigning work in the coming years.

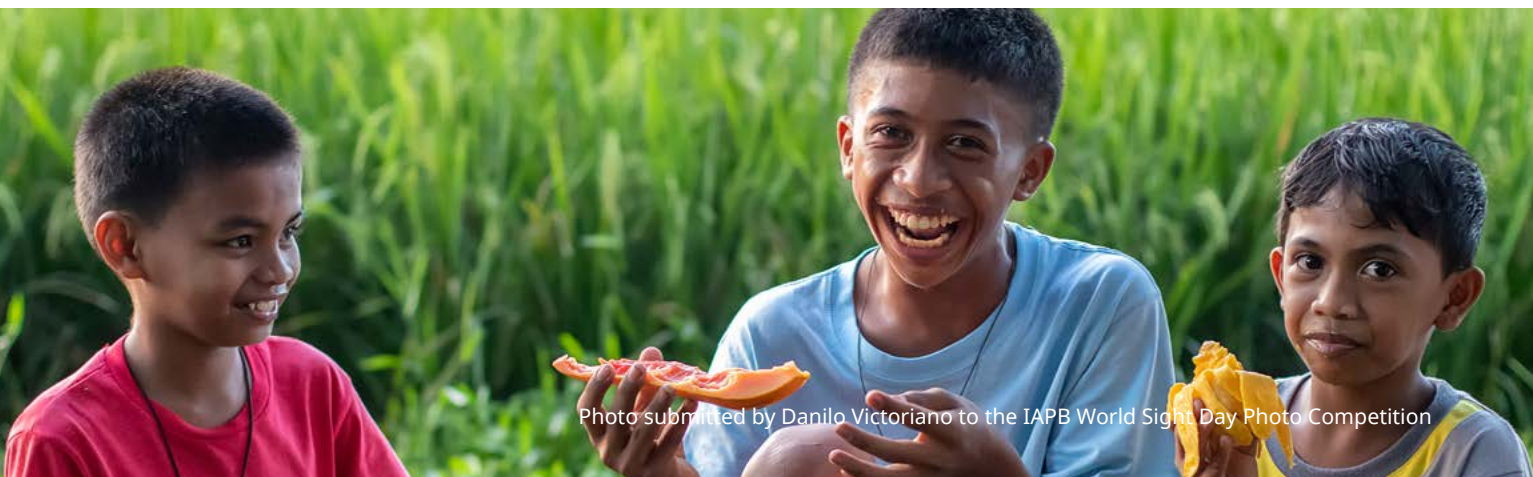


Photo submitted by Danilo Victoriano to the IAPB World Sight Day Photo Competition

Focus on Child Eye Health included:

FRIENDS OF VISION

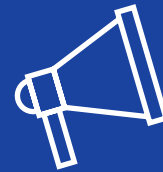
A UN Friends of Vision event delivered by the IAPB Advocacy team



Two webinars – 2030 In Sight for Our Children



Curated expert opinion pieces and case studies that focused on this critical issue



Yearlong promotion of Focus on Child Eye Health through IAPB social media channels, featuring weekly content



A campaign focused on achieving a commitment to child eye health at the 2022 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting held in Rwanda



A campaign aimed at the UN Transforming Education Summit

2022 Highlights

- Following the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (20-25 June 2022), the 54 leaders of Commonwealth nations built on their commitment from 2018 calling on countries to make a 'multi-pronged approach for access to screenings and affordable vision treatments, especially for children.' The commitment was achieved following a 4-year campaign led by the [Vision for the Commonwealth](#) which included targeted open letters to key government leaders and holding the Vision for the Commonwealth reception at Westminster, London with HRH the Countess of Wessex.
- The IAPB Advocacy Team traveled to Paris to participate in the Transforming Education Pre-Summit to promote child eye health and school eye health programmes where they used innovative public campaign materials based on the theme: 'If you Struggle to See, You Struggle to Learn' to engage with attending delegates. We distributed over 200 'workbooks' with key child eye health and education messages and collected countless signatures on a 'commitment chalkboard' calling for the adoption of school-based eye health programmes and policies. Notable people who signed the board included, the Youth Representative of the SDG4 High-Level Steering Committee, Ministers of Education for Sierra Leone and Nepal, and representatives from UNICEF and UNESCO.
- As a result of our collective advocacy efforts, eye health was included in the [Outcome Discussion Paper for Action Track I](#) at TES.
- Several expert opinion pieces published, 72% from female voices in the field
- Support from IAPB Membership online this was in the form of using the hashtag #FocusOnChildEyeHealth, cross promoting our events and expert content and re-sharing.
- Several media mentions including articles in InVision Magazine, Ophthalmology Times, and Eyewire News.

Featured in:

INVISION
INVISIONMAG.COM

Ophthalmology
TIMES

eyewire⁺

Events

1. Advocacy – If you struggle to see, you struggle to learn at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum

The UN Friends of Vision Group held the official side event, “If you Struggle to See, You Struggle to Learn: Accelerating Progress Towards the SDGs through School Eye Health Programmes,” at the 2022 [High-Level Political Forum](#).

Speakers included UN Ambassadors, a keynote address by His Excellency the President of the Republic of Botswana, Mokgweetsi E.K. Masisi, MP, a World Bank Economist, a child eye health expert, WHO Director and a Technical Specialist on School Health and Nutrition from Save the Children.



2. Knowledge – 2030 In Sight for Our Children Webinars

The webinar discussed the actions that needed to be taken to accelerate the efforts to elevate, integrate and activate child eye health to meet the growing eye care needs among our children.

The expert panel included Priya Morjaria, Head of Global Programme Design, Peek Vision & Co-Chair, IAPB School Eye Health Work Group, Elizabeth Kurian, CEO, Mission for Vision, Andreas Mueller, Consultant, World Health Organization Eye Care Programme, Jammel Rizwana Hussaindeen, Head, Rivoli Vision Academy, Rivoli Vision UAE, Milka Mafwiri, Consultant ophthalmic surgeon at Muhimbili National Hospital and Associate Professor at Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences (MUHAS) and Professor Kathryn Saunders, Senior Academic at Ulster University.

The [two webinars](#) had experts presenting examples that created an impact in elevating, integrating, and activating child eye health among the widest of audiences, stakeholders, and beneficiaries.

We need to:

- Advocate with evidence and target urgent political prioritization of Child Eye Health in resolutions, national policies and development plans.
- Ensure that child eye care is well resourced and properly integrated into mainstream health systems. This starts from inclusion in maternal and neonatal policies to school settings and wider health and rehabilitative systems. This also means we need to involve and or train more people on the ground at multiple levels across systems to provide the continuum of services a child will need.
- Campaign and promote child eye health to a wider audience that will catalyze individuals to be proactive and demand and seek eyecare when needed. This means an active agenda from national governments and stakeholders on eye health promotion, and availability of effective evidence-based information that is contextual, appropriate, and inclusive.



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Thank you everyone for the detailed and informative webinar on Child Eye Health!

-Focus On Child Eye Health Participant

3. Knowledge

Starting in January 2022, we were able to curate and deliver more than eighteen expert opinion pieces relating to [Focus on Child Eye Health](#).

Here are some examples of the specially curated expert opinion pieces

- [On the International Day of Education, Priya Morjaria](#) highlights the need to work with schools as the eye health sector to make an impact.
- [During Myopia Awareness Week, Stuart Cockerill, IAPB Trustee Board member](#), Head of Global Commercial Operations, Specialty EyeCare at CooperVision elaborates CooperVision's goals to increase awareness of the importance of regular vision screenings, particularly in children who will be experiencing the most change in their vision, as well as an understanding of the options that are available for eye care professionals to help slow the progression of myopia.
- On the 30th of March 2022, the World Health Organization launched its [first ever global guidelines to support women and newborns in the postnatal period](#) (the first six weeks after birth).(1) Within these guidelines is a really significant milestone for child eye health – universal newborn eye screening (NES) was included. Aesha NJ Malik Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon, International Centre for Eye Health answers our Q and A segment on what does this mean for our sector.
- Patricia Sparrow CEO, Vision 2020 Australia [explains why Vision 2020 Australia and its members developed a National Children's Vision Framework](#) and how it will help not only the children, but the broader community and economy.

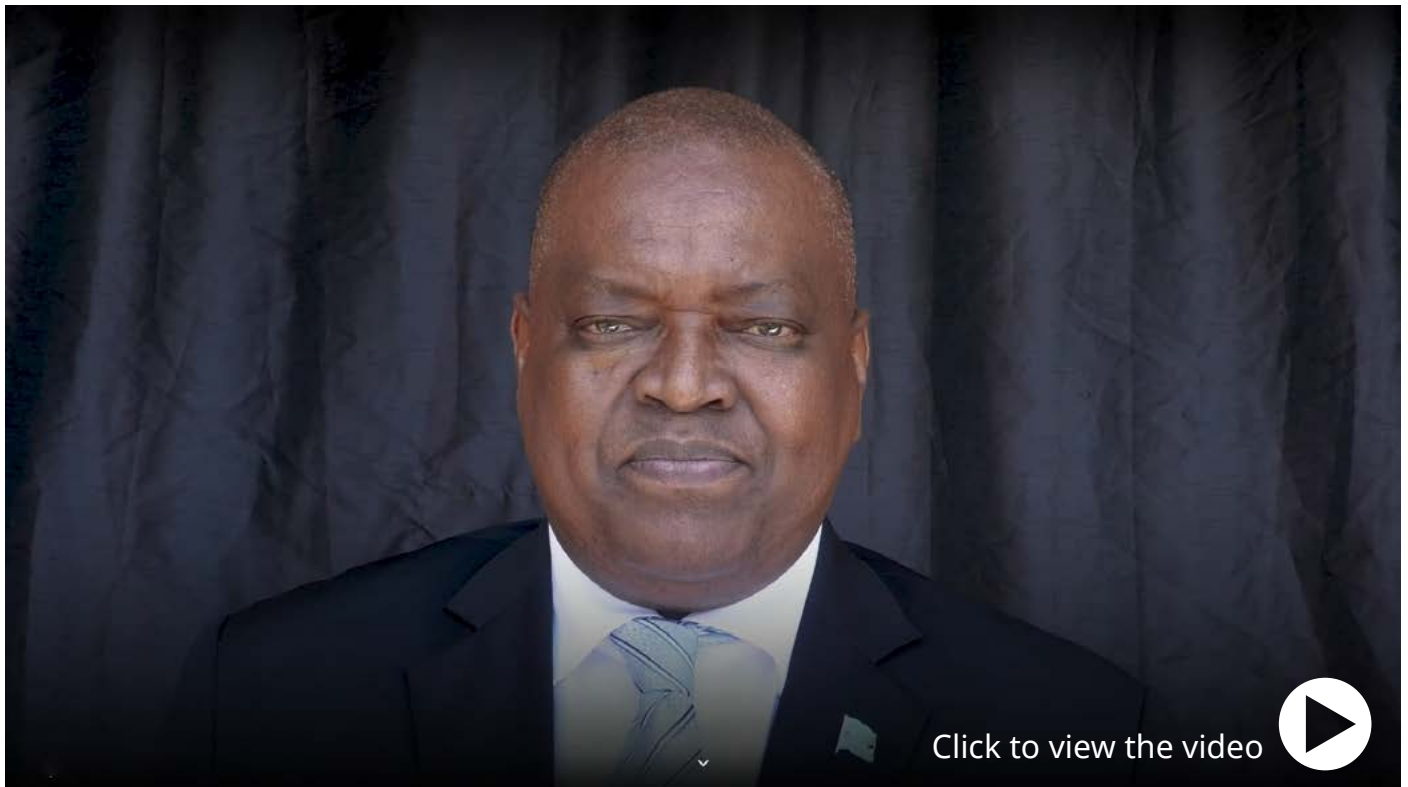


Photo submitted by Arpan Chowdhury to the IAPB World Sight Day Photo Competition

4. Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Rwanda

At the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, a landmark commitment to 'a multi-pronged approach for access to screenings and affordable vision treatments, especially for children' was made. The commitment comes after a 4-year campaign by the [Vision for the Commonwealth Coalition](#) which includes charities and organisations from across the Commonwealth and is led by IAPB. The campaign called for Commonwealth leaders to prioritise school vision screenings and affordable treatment for all children living in Commonwealth nations.

[A blog, covering the outcomes of the meeting in Rwanda was published, a video featuring HE President Masisi of Botswana was produced and a petition calling for support was shared across social media channel.](#)



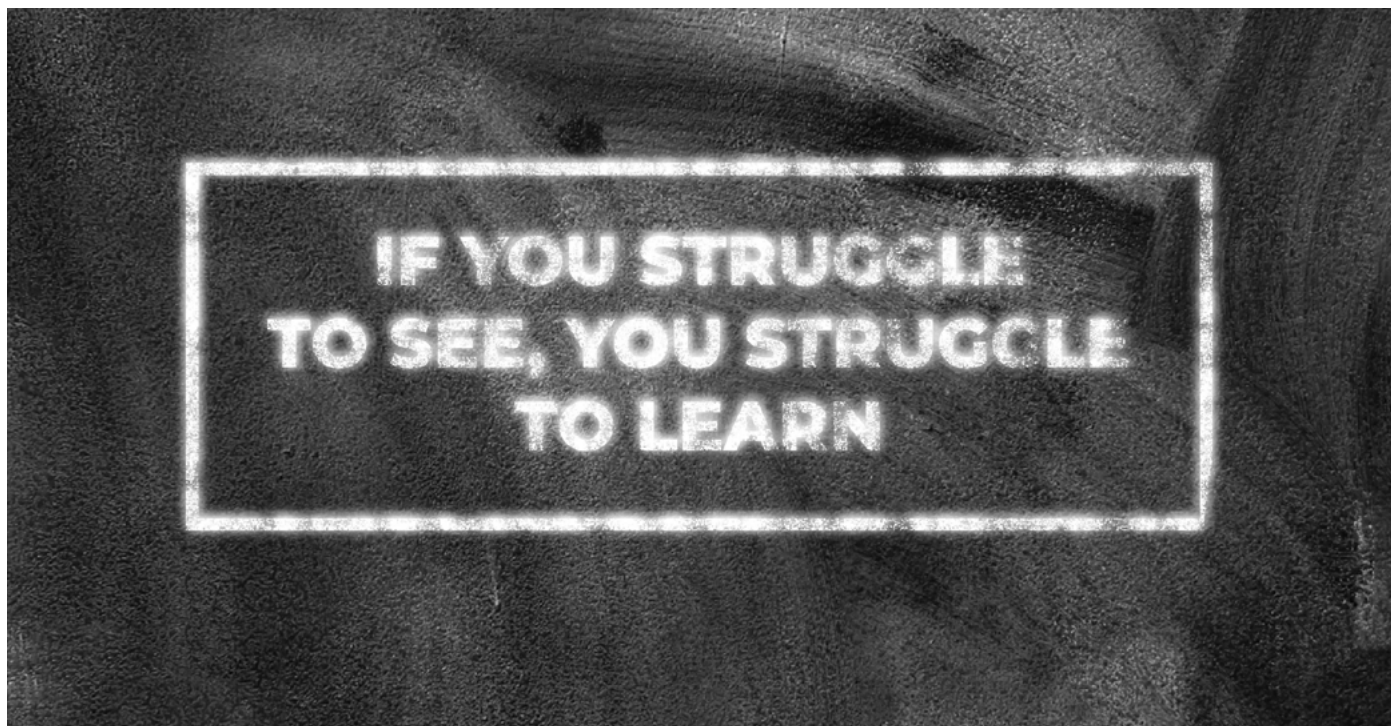
5. Vision for the Commonwealth Reception



"IAPB, with the support of the Vision for the Commonwealth Coalition, hosted the Vision for the Commonwealth reception at Westminster, London with [HRH the Countess of Wessex](#).

To coincide with the Education World Forum in London, HRH The Countess of Wessex, Commonwealth High Commissioners, politicians and leaders in eye health gathered to discuss the importance of eye health for children across the Commonwealth. The event, highlighted the importance of sight to educational attainment and the potential that can be unlocked through the provision of school sight screenings.

6. Transforming Education Pre-Summit, UNESCO Paris (TES)



The IAPB Advocacy Team traveled to Paris to participate in the Transforming Education Pre-Summit (June 28-30) at UNESCO Headquarters and promote child eye health and school eye health programmes as levers for game-changing transformations of education policy and practice in the medium and longer-term.

Following the distribution of a detailed brief on school eye health by the Friends of Vision co-chair Ambassadors across their UN networks, the Advocacy team utilized innovative public facing campaign materials to meet with over 200 delegates participating at the pre-summit and garner multilateral support for the inclusion of School Eye Health Programs in national commitments that will be presented at the Transforming Education Summit in New York this September.

IAPB set up a promotional hub in the Global Village at UNESCO Headquarters and used innovative public campaign materials based on the theme: 'If you Struggle to See, You Struggle to Learn' to engage with attending delegates and build interest and support for school eye health programmes. IAPB distributed over 200 'workbooks' with key child eye health and education messages and collected countless signatures on a 'commitment chalkboard' calling for the adoption of school-based eye health programmes and policies. Notable people who signed the board included, the Youth Representative of the SDG4 High-Level Steering Committee, Ministers of Education for Sierra Leone and Nepal, and representatives from UNICEF and UNESCO.

IAPB also attended the Pre-Summit Ministerial segment.

Photo submitted by Swapnil Thakur to the IAPB World Sight Day Photo Competition

What next for IAPB's work on Child Eye Health

The significant achievements made in 2022 on the critical role vision plays in delivering the knowledge, skills and outlooks needed for children and young people to excel in today's world and contribute to sustainable, healthy and peaceful futures will play a crucial role in 2023 as the focus turns from global policy to national action.

At the conclusion of TES, the UN [Secretary-General released a Vision Statement](#) to Member States and the global public that lays out a path for education in the 21st century. It will serve as an input to negotiations in preparation of the Summit of the Future which will be held at the UN in 2024. The SDG 4 High-Level Steering Committee will be responsible for the [follow-up process](#) to further shape the future of education and meet 2030 SDG Education targets. The Committee will continue to monitor progress, promote and facilitate knowledge and practice exchange, engage the youth, and champion cross-sector and multilateral cooperation. The global eye health sector will continue to push for the inclusion of child eye health and comprehensive school health programs amongst these critical stakeholders to ensure vision ceases to be a barrier to accessing quality education.

In addition, 2023 holds the opportunity to elevate the role of child eye health across the sustainable development agenda with the delivery of Voluntary National Reviews at the UN's High-Level Political Forum (July) as well as the SDG Summit at UNHQ (September).



Photo submitted by Steele Burrow to the IAPB World Sight Day Photo Competition

Voluntary National Reviews provide countries with a monitoring mechanism, as well as a platform, to measure and promote their progress towards the 2030 goals. National consultations are often carried out to feed into the Voluntary National Reviews process and provide NGOs with the opportunity to discuss SDG implementation and to strengthen relationships with policymakers. In 2023, IAPB aims to develop a formal guide to support the inclusion of vision, particularly child eye health, in national consultations and the outcome Voluntary National Reviews'. Although vision was neglected to be included as an SDG indicator, the UN resolution nonetheless expressly encourages Member States to consider addressing the situation of eye health in their Voluntary National Reviews in order to support of whole-of-government approach to vision that will help fulfill their commitment of ensuring vision for everyone and support efforts of achieving the SDGs by 2030.

The SDG Summit marks the mid-point of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and will carry out a comprehensive review of the state of the SDGs, respond to the impact of multiple and interlocking crises, and provide high-level political guidance on transformative and accelerated actions leading up to the 2030 deadline. The summit will be informed by the Secretary-General's SDG progress report and analysis from the UN system following HLPF. IAPB and the Friends of Vision will seek to ensure the inclusion of vision and child eye health in the summit's Political Declaration – an outcome document likely to have great influence in the 2045 global development agenda.

Focus in Child Eye Health is supported by CooperVision.



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