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## IAPB Briefing Paper



International Agency for the  
Prevention of Blindness

### THE G20 AND VISION 2020



The purpose of IAPB Briefing Papers is to inform IAPB members and others about important and emerging issues affecting VISION 2020: The Right to Sight.



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### What is the G20?

The Group of 20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors (G20) was established in 1999. It brings together the 20 largest world economies, collectively representing 80% of global GDP, and two-thirds of the world's population. A list of the G20 countries is provided below.

The Group was initially set up as a forum for discussion of key global economic challenges. However, since 2008, it has met at Heads of Government level (so-called "Leaders"), and its purview has expanded extensively. In part, this reflected recognition that smaller groupings, such as the G8, lacked legitimacy and authority, to address international issues at a time when the balance of world economic power was shifting rapidly.

At their Toronto Summit in 2010, Leaders declared that "narrowing the development gap and reducing poverty are integral" to the G20's broader goals. A working Group was established, jointly chaired by South Africa and Korea, which produced the "Seoul Development Consensus for Shared Growth". This stated that "the recent crisis is disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable in the poorest countries. We recognise that consistently high levels of **inclusive** growth in low income countries, in particular, are critically necessary, if not sufficient, for the eradication of extreme poverty". Underpinning the Consensus itself is a "Multi Year Action Plan on Development". Relevant here are references to the need to develop infrastructure (often a critical precondition for the effective delivery of health services); a commitment to human resource development (with a specific reference to the need to identify links between "education, health problems, and gender gaps"), and; a commitment to prepare best practice guidelines on the implementation of "social protection mechanisms".

## Why is the G20 relevant to VISION 2020?

The G20 embraces all the major Official Development Assistance donors<sup>1</sup>, but also includes so-called emerging donors such as China, Korea, and India. As a forum for debate, it is seen by most developing countries as having greater legitimacy than some of the Bretton Woods institutions such as the World Bank or the IMF<sup>2</sup>.

A large proportion of the world's blind people live in G20 countries. Given the relative prosperity of these countries, this statistic appears, at first sight, somewhat surprising. But the G20 includes the entire developed world where the prevalence of blindness and visual impairment is rising as life expectancy increases. And, although rich in comparative terms, many G20 countries have large (mainly rural) populations which are relatively poor. Around 25 percent of blind people live in India and China. Trachoma is endemic in 4 G20 countries<sup>3</sup>. In a number of G20 countries, the cataract surgical rate remains extremely low.

Yet it is the developing country G20 members that do have the capacity, in terms of both financial and human resources, to enhance the delivery of eye care services in a manner which could make a significant contribution to the realisation of the goals of VISION 2020. Developed country G20 members must also play their full part. Not only should this include providing additional resources to combat avoidable blindness which, given the proven cost effectiveness of eye care delivery, represents a “quick win” for any poverty alleviation aid strategy. They should also respect the “WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel”<sup>4</sup>, which is designed to discourage developed economies from actively recruiting health personnel from developing countries facing a critical shortage of health workers.

### Key Messages

- A very large proportion of the world's blind population live in the G20 countries: as middle income/emerging economies G20 Governments are encouraged to upscale their eye care service delivery in line with commitments they have made at several WHO Annual Assemblies;
- Many G20 developing country members have made remarkable progress in tackling avoidable blindness and visual impairment: we encourage them to help poorer countries through the transfer of skills and technology;
- Donor countries are encouraged to recognise that their development strategies are inclusive and reach those who are amongst the most vulnerable and marginalised;
- Developed country G20 members must show leadership in observing the voluntary WHO Code of Practice on the international recruitment of health workers.

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<sup>1</sup> A notable exception is Norway which is the second most generous aid donor (in terms of aid as a percentage of GDP), but is not a member of the G20 in its own right, nor indirectly represented by virtue of EU membership.

<sup>2</sup> The World Bank is, however, a member of the Working Group, together with representatives of all the Multinational Development Banks.

<sup>3</sup> Australia, Brazil, China and India.

<sup>4</sup> Adopted By the World Health Assembly (2010) under Resolution 63.13



- **G 20 countries**

- Argentina
- Australia
- Brazil
- Canada
- China
- European Union
- France
- Germany
- India
- Indonesia
- Italy
- Japan
- Mexico
- Russia
- Saudi Arabia
- South Africa
- Republic of Korea
- Turkey
- United Kingdom
- United States of America