



## 8 October 2015 is World Sight Day

*IAPB's "#EyecareForAll" Photo Competition closes today; the competition, with support from Bayer, raises awareness of blindness prevention activities around the world*

**8 October 2015** (Immediate release): The International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) and many eye care organisations, professionals, beneficiaries and supporting public will be celebrating World Sight Day (WSD) today. WSD is an international day of awareness about avoidable blindness and its prevention, marked on the second Thursday of October every year.

Every year, WSD is celebrated in over 300 events in 60 countries around the world. This year, IAPB has given out the global call to action: **"Eye care for all"**. Eye health organisations, partners and supporters use WSD to raise public awareness of blindness & vision impairment as major international public health issues.

Since June this year, IAPB has been conducting an online photo competition with the theme (and hashtag) "Eye care for all", encouraging people to share photos that draw attention to universal eye health coverage, especially for those who are vulnerable and most in need.

The call to action is linked to the World Health Organization's (WHO) 'Global Action Plan' for the prevention of Avoidable Blindness and Visual Impairment adopted in May 2013. With a focus on delivering 'Universal Eye Health' over the next 5 years, the Plan urges member countries to bring the prevalence of avoidable blindness down by 25%, by the year 2019 (from 2010 figures). The Plan emphasises the need for generating evidence, developing deeper integration of eye health with wider health systems and building multi-sectoral partnerships towards ensuring Universal Eye Health.

80% of people with vision impairment are avoidably so. Research shows that every dollar spent on eye health has a two-fold return on investment - in developing countries, home to 90% of all vision impairment, there is a four-fold return. Yet current estimates put the number of people living with significant visual impairment at 285 million, 39 million of whom are blind. IAPB and its members and partners recognise that governments are key to ensuring access to quality eye health services and eliminating avoidable blindness.

Representing over 150 organisations, including every major eye health NGO, global professional associations of ophthalmology and optometry, eye hospitals and corporations, IAPB has been working over many years to draw attention to blindness prevention and rehabilitation.



“World Sight Day is a fantastic opportunity to draw attention to the fact that 4 out of 5 people around the world are needlessly vision impaired”, said Joanna Conlon, Director of Development and Communications, IAPB. “Let us celebrate our hard-won victories and work together to deliver more in the future”.

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### Notes to Editors:

#### About IAPB

The International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) is the coordinating membership organisation leading international efforts in blindness prevention activities. IAPB’s mission is to eliminate the main causes of avoidable blindness and visual impairment by bringing together governments and non-governmental agencies to facilitate the planning, development and implementation of sustainable national eye care programmes. Please visit: [www.iapb.org](http://www.iapb.org)

#### World Sight Day

World Sight Day (WSD) is an annual day of awareness held on the second Thursday of October, to focus global attention on blindness and vision impairment. World Sight Day 2015 is on **8 October 2015**. This year too, the theme is ‘Universal Eye Health’, and the ‘Call to Action’ is “**Eye care for all**”. [www.iapb.org/wsd15](http://www.iapb.org/wsd15) #EyeCareForAll

The Photo competition will be a key focus for IAPB during its World Sight Day (8 October 2015) celebrations this year. For more information do visit the micro-site: <http://photocomp.iapb.org>

#### Global Facts

- About 285 million people are visually impaired worldwide: 39 million are blind and 246 million have low vision (severe or moderate visual impairment)
- Preventable causes are as high as 80% of the total global visual impairment burden
- About 90% of the world's visually impaired people live in developing countries.