



International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness

**IAPB BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
MARCH 26, 2012**

REGIONAL REPORTS ON VISION 2020 ACHIEVEMENTS - WESTERN PACIFIC

I. GENERAL REGIONAL OVERVIEW

As usual, I apologise for the delay in getting this to you. Despite expanded Regional staffing we have been involved in moving offices, recruiting new personnel, getting the Sub-Regional Secretariats operational and there has been an uncharacteristically heavy travel burden so early in the year.

The Regional Office has moved and is now co-located with the new and spacious FHF Office in Melbourne, courtesy of Brian Doolan and Lesley Podesta. With the unregistered status of IAPB in Australia there were rather prolonged negotiations but these were easily resolved through the good will of all concerned.

Jennifer Gersbeck and Vision 2020 Australia have continued to be very supportive and will continue to pay the salaries for the Regional staff members and audit our accounts. Vision 2020 Australia now has more office space.

IAPB WPR's relationship with AusAID has blossomed over the past months since the Council of Members meeting last September. With strong support from Vision 2020 Australia, AusAID has understood more clearly our Regional role and responsibilities. AusAID has also been impressed with our strong working relationship with WHO WPRO.

AusAID wishes to foster that relationship through jointly funding IAPB-WHO PBL activities from 2013-2016, separately from ABI Consortium funding. Although details still have to be worked out regarding how funds are to be managed between WHO WPRO and IAPB WPR, discussions remain harmonious. AusAID has indicated a more relaxed attitude to funds being used by both organisations to cover our responsibilities in China, which is very good news. This will allow us to more effectively support our two Co-Chairs in China for workshops and Regional meetings.

The process of devolving responsibility to the Sub-Regions continues, with IAPB Secretariats becoming operational in the Pacific Islands Sub-Region and in the South East Asia and Islands Sub-Region (previously ASEAN SR). Staff (see HR section below) have been recruited and are already active and making a difference. This will also happen in China, thanks to strong and proactive support from the Fred Hollows Foundation, Seva International, Seva Canada and HKI. We have also had assurance from CBM and ORBIS that they also support this initiative.

2. KEY EVENTS, ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS

2.1 Disease Control: Trachoma and Diabetes Retinopathy continue to be targets of widespread attention.

2.1.1 PacET: (Pacific Elimination of Trachoma) has started with the Solomon islands having completed one Population-based Prevalence Survey and are starting two more in a few weeks time. Fiji and Kiribati are expected to follow soon after. A Pacific Islands Trachoma Coordinator will be recruited by WHO South Pacific Office and Andreas Mueller so that activities can be coordinated. A lot of advocacy remains to be done to get buy-in from other countries but IAPB WPR has funds from AusAID for this and for the mapping. IAPB and WHO are working closely together on this. In early September Sydney will host the annual NGO-NTD forum.

2.1.2 Diabetes: A number of initiatives are ongoing, particularly in Australia and the Pacific Islands by different IAPB members and governments. WHO WPRO declared NCDs, especially Diabetes, to be a major priority for the Region at the last Regional Committee Meeting held in Manila last September. Training, screening, service delivery, research and HMIS are all aspects that different organisations and institutions are involved with.

As reported before, other VISION 2020 targets continue to be addressed widely through project implementation and research. Research is about to commence in Cambodia to obtain evidence for the best type of glasses for correcting Refractive Error in children. The quality of surgical and other outcomes continue to be hard to assess and require different approaches that are being considered.

2.2 Human Resource Development:

2.2.1 *Sheona McGraw*, our Regional Programs Manager has decided to return to Canada for family reasons. She has done a great job and we will miss her. We have been lucky to recruit an able successor for her position in *Damian Facciolo* who has just taken over.

Damian is assisted by *Ms Komal Ram*, Programs Coordinator with special responsibility for the Pacific Islands (she is from Fiji) and *Ms Alecia Duke* who is responsible for Communications and Administration.

Most of our Co-Chairs now have local IAPB Secretariats. In the Pacific Islands Secretariat Coordinator *Dr Aneseini Cama* assists *Dr John Szetu* and in the SEA&I Sub-Region *Steve Alcantara* is the Secretariat Coordinator assisting *Dr Noel Chua*. In addition Philippines and PNG have their own IAPB supported Secretariat personnel for coordinating and supporting VISION 2020 activities with the National PBL Committees. Already there are signs that Ministries are placing a higher priority on eye health and PBL. In China, where we have been unable to spend Australian Government funds, the IAPB Secretariat will be headed by *Leshan Tan*, already a very successful Co-Chair and China Country Manager for FHF. *Leshan* has a broad vision for how he sees sustainable eye health programming developing in China. His new role fits well with his ideas. We are grateful to FHF for releasing and encouraging *Leshan* to play a more prominent leading role in his country's eye health development. The Ministry of Health in Beijing also supports this initiative and hopes that the China IAPB Secretariat, representing

the interests of all the NGOs, will work closely with their VISION 2020 office in Beijing, when it opens.

2.2.2 *WHO WPRO Coordinator for PBL&VI, Dr Andreas Mueller* has had his temporary status changed to that of a 2 year full-time contract. Andreas is popular with WPRO leadership and has been very active. He communicates freely with IAPB WPR, almost on a daily basis. AusAID is very happy with his appointment change and our close working relationship.

2.2.3 *Training programs* continue across the Region. The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmology (RANZCO) has started to implement its joint program with the Pacific Eye Institute to improve training and research in Diabetic Retinopathy and continues to support training in Cambodia in partnership with The Fred Hollows Foundation.

2.3 Infrastructure and Technology:

2.3.1 The QC fundus camera is being field tested in Fiji and other affordable imaging devices are being promoted around the Region and further afield. Retinal imaging will soon be very much more affordable and give strength to screening programs for Diabetic Retinopathy, AMD and possibly even glaucoma.

2.3.2 Research is being done in Nepal on outreach Phaco for cataract since their patients are presenting much earlier, well before the cataracts cause blindness. In WPR this is being viewed with interest in Vietnam and the Pacific Islands as surgeons become more confident. However, SICS still remains the most cost-effective form of surgery for tackling the public health problem of cataract.

2.3.3 Finally, the new direct ophthalmoscope that is being supported by FHF is almost ready for release and should soon be available online through the IAPB Standard Equipment List, retailing at around GBPI0. The designer is working on an equally affordable indirect ophthalmoscope.

2.4 Advocacy: We see this as going well. There remains much to be done however, with a strong emphasis on needing to get better and more measurable information on surgical coverage and quality of outcomes as well as other PBL activities. “Reach” has improved and will continue to do so through our Sub-Regional Secretariats and Co-Chairs. Our increased presence at the WHO Regional Session in Manila was noticed and has helped raise the profile of Avoidable Blindness amongst both Member States and WHO itself.

3. FUTURE CHALLENGES

Once again, most have already been articulated. The challenges are to some extent resolving: Lao PDR has new and vigorous leadership, with a joint IAPB-MOH-WHO Workshop planned for later this year. PNG seems to have developed some momentum with a new PBL Secretariat coordinator, Samoa and Vanuatu are starting to take more interest in eye health for a number of reasons. We can expect this trend to continue as our Secretariats extend their influence to various parts of the Region.

Meanwhile we continue to probe and encourage collaborative initiatives that will prompt changes of attitude and breakdown of barriers.

Richard Le Mesurier, Chair, Western Pacific Region. 27.03.2012