

VISION 2020
THE RIGHT TO SIGHT
AUSTRALIA
GLOBAL CONSORTIUM

Global Consortium

An Australian partnership working to eliminate avoidable blindness and reduce the impact of vision loss in our region



Vision 2020 Australia

Global Consortium

The Global Consortium is a partnership of nine Australian eye health and vision care organisations working to eliminate avoidable blindness and vision loss in the Asia Pacific region.

The Global Consortium launched in November 2009 and has been implementing programs since January 2010. Funding for these programs run through to December 2012.

Cover photo courtesy of The Fred Hollows Foundation
Image above courtesy of ICEE, photographer Dean Safron

Our vision for the future

Avoidable Blindness Initiative

In 2007, recognising Australia's expertise and the importance of eliminating avoidable blindness, the Australian Labor Party announced a $45 million Avoidable Blindness Initiative to tackle blindness and reduce poverty in the Asia Pacific.

The Avoidable Blindness Initiative is based on the first phase of Vision 2020 Australia's 10 year Plan to Eliminate Avoidable Blindness and Vision Impairment in our Region.

This Regional Plan adopts a multifaceted approach to improving eye health, focusing on areas including the development of national plans, human resource development to ensure that public health systems have sufficient numbers of appropriately skilled personnel, operations to treat cataract and other blinding conditions, and the development of infrastructure and information systems.

The key components of the Avoidable Blindness Initiative are:

- Developing strategic **partnerships** between a range of NGOs and other organisations working in eye health and vision care, building on and expanding existing work
- Strengthening existing eye care training institutions and the **capacity** of eye care workers
- Piloting the **Vision Centre approach** as part of the delivery of eye health and vision care needs
- Assessing eye health and vision care needs to inform future efforts to reduce avoidable blindness



Joshua, a spiritual man, is grateful he can now read again with his new glasses from the ICEE optical clinics in the Solomon Islands which offer local access to affordable eye care.
Photo courtesy of ICEE.

Transforming the lives of millions

Eighty per cent of global blindness is preventable or treatable. In 2000, the World Health Organisation and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness established VISION 2020 which aims to eliminate avoidable blindness around the world by the year 2020.

As part of this, the Vision 2020 Australia Global Consortium is working in partnership with the Australian Government to eliminate avoidable blindness in the Asia Pacific. The partnership is set to restore or improve the vision of as many as 100 million people in the region over the next decade.

Planning for the future

As we move into the next phase of the Avoidable Blindness Initiative, planning is underway to ensure the Global Consortium's future programming contributes to the elimination of avoidable blindness comprehensively and effectively. Workshops have been held across the Asia Pacific to enable whole of country coordination of blindness prevention programs. These workshops involved all stakeholders undertaking eye health activities, including local NGOs, international NGOs, health ministry representatives and AusAID. Such workshops are an important platform for information sharing and the development of collaborative program approaches.

The Global Consortium is continuing to strengthen its governance processes to ensure its programs remain at the cutting edge of Australia's aid program. One way this is happening is through workshops for Consortium stakeholders which focus on capacity building in key areas, including how Global Consortium activities can best contribute to the strengthening of the health systems in which they are embedded.

> "Blindness is both a cause and consequence of poverty. It impacts not only individuals but entire communities. By improving eye care and reducing preventable blindness in Asia Pacific, we can help reduce poverty in the region."
>
> Jennifer Gersbeck
> CEO, Vision 2020 Australia

Working together to achieve our goals

Globally, approximately 285 million[1] people are vision impaired. In response to this crucial public health issue, Vision 2020 Australia and its members are working with the Australian Government and partners across the Asia Pacific to eliminate avoidable blindness in our region.

Members of Vision 2020 Australia's Global Consortium are implementing 14 programs across seven countries, focusing on the key tasks of training eye health staff, developing much needed infrastructure including eye clinics, hospitals and Vision Centres, and directly treating diseases like cataract through surgeries and other sight restoring interventions.

Twelve months into the project, results demonstrate that the Global Consortium's programs are reducing levels of blindness and that local capacity is being enhanced to ensure sustainability of efforts to eliminate avoidable blindness in years to come. Programs are also providing a demonstration of tangible, cost effective development assistance and generating goodwill among both the governments and people who benefit from Australia's aid program.



Cambodia

Programs focus on developing infrastructure and human resources to supply glasses. Takeo Eye Hospital's capacity has been increased and services enhanced. Gender and disability inclusiveness is being strengthened and further integrated into Global Consortium activities.

Programs

CBM Australia: Strengthening gender and disability inclusive approaches to community eye health to reduce avoidable blindness

International Centre for Eyecare Education (ICEE): Refractive error service development and capacity building

The Fred Hollows Foundation (FHF): Cambodia avoidable blindness and visual impairment project

Results

- 7,933 cataract and other sight restoring surgeries were provided
- Access to care has been increased through 37,568 eye health consultations
- Refractive error screening carried out for 2,669 children, spectacles were provided to 489 children
- 1,509 referrals to other services and Disabled Persons Organisations
- 65,000 eye health education materials produced
- Over 700 health professionals received eye health related training
- Launch of the Takeo Eye Hospital in April 2010

Vietnam

Due to the high rates of avoidable blindness, agencies have adopted a multifaceted approach. The focus is on developing infrastructure and human resources, and reducing the cataract backlog. The Vietnam Australia Vision Support program aims to maximise the efficiency between participating agencies and eliminate overlap.

Programs

CBM Australia: Strengthening gender and disability inclusive approaches to community eye health to reduce avoidable blindness

ICEE: Refractive error service development and capacity building

FHF: Vietnam eye care capacity development project

FHF: Vietnam Australia Vision Support Program

Results

- 3,504 eye surgeries conducted in 2010, over half of which were for cataract
- 1,660 non-cataract surgeries carried out including 39 children treated for strabismus and congenital cataract
- Refractive error screening carried out for 97,697 children and 1,067 adults
- Over 3,000 eye health personnel received training across a range of areas
- 1,856 village health workers received basic eye kits to enable primary health care
- 445 teachers received training in refractive error screening

[1] *'World Health Report 2011 Health Systems Financing: The Path to Universal Coverage'*

Photo above courtesy of ICEE, photographer Dean Safron
Cambodia photo courtesy of CBM Australia
Vietnam photo courtesy of FHF
Timor-Leste photo courtesy of Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS)
Papua New Guinea photo courtesy of ICEE
Solomon Islands photo courtesy of Foresight Australia
Samoa photo courtesy of Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children (RIDBC)
Fiji photo courtesy of RIDBC



Vietnam: The Fred Hollows Foundation (FHF)

Ho Thi Tam is a poor mother of nine whose eyesight had started to fail. Ms Tam could no longer help in the food planting and harvesting which was so important for feeding the family. A cataract screening discovered she had cataracts in both eyes; she was operated on and can now walk unassisted and see her children.

"Yes, I can see now. I can see my beloved daughters and sons. Thank you, thank you so much!"

Cambodia: CBM Australia

Benn Sitha is a 40 year old man living in the Takeo Province in Cambodia. Benn has been unable to walk properly and has had poor vision since he was a small boy. When he was 35 his vision started to deteriorate. In 2006 Benn decided it was time to get help.

He knew he would not be able to work or see his seven children without his vision.

Benn heard about the eye treatment available at the Takeo Eye Hospital. His treatment was successful and in 2010 he went back to have his right eye treated. He can now see again and is very happy and hopeful for his future.

Timor-Leste: Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS)

At the tender age of 11, Abilio Da Costa is completely blind and has never been to school. In 2010 his father brought him to see the visiting eye team at Baucau Hospital. Dominggos from East Timor Blind Union has been teaching Abilio to use a white cane. "Being vision impaired myself, I know exactly what Abilio is going through. I want him and his father to know many things are still possible for Abilio."

"With proper training and support, Abilio can go to school and do many things just like other children his age."

Regional: Centre for Eye Research Australia (CERA)

CERA is pleased to report that as of March 2011 the International Agency for Prevention of Blindness will host the regional training resource (RTR) information on their new regional website. This information will be easily searchable by course, country, level of qualification and language, thereby rendering it accessible to potential students and service planners throughout the region.

Solomon Islands: Foresight Australia

John Hue was approached by Foresight Australia to work as a project officer for the Avoidable Blindness Initiative Project in the Solomon Islands. "This is a very special honor for me to have a role in this project"

"I would like to use my background knowledge with the Solomon Islands Government to help implement the Solomon Islands program."

Papua New Guinea: International Centre for Eyecare Education (ICEE)

Moses oversees the spectacle supply chain to three PNG Eye Care Vision Centres and six Spectacle Supply Units around the country.

"PNG Eye Care is important because the people of PNG need quality spectacles at affordable prices."

"Vision Centres are now being opened in other areas – making eye care more affordable for the people of PNG".

Fiji: Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children (RIDBC)

RIDBC hosted an intensive training course in Sydney attended by Maraia Matakibau from the Fiji Ministry of Health.

"The training has given me another opportunity to improve the delivery of the rehabilitation services in the community."

"It has enabled upgrading of skills and knowledge in regard to working with people who are vision impaired. This includes early identification and detection, intervention and management."

Samoa: Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children (RIDBC)

Meritiana Fepuleai is the Inclusive Education Adviser with SENESE. Meritiana received Vision Screening Training in 2010. "Before I received the training I was only able to support children who had been fortunate enough to have been diagnosed but now I can go into schools and find the children who have undiagnosed vision impairment."

"This means that I can help children to receive treatment to correct the impairment. I am able to work with them earlier to enable them to achieve their potential."

Timor-Leste

There is an acute shortage of personnel in Timor-Leste and heavy dependence on specialist services from international NGOs. Activities focus on extending eye care beyond the capital, Dili, so rural areas have access to much needed eye care services.

Program

Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS): Expanding eye care services, capability and rehabilitation

Results

- In Timor-Leste, four outreach visits conducted by the resident ophthalmology team. 270 patients examined and 108 received surgery
- Eight nurses were trained in the use of specialised eye equipment in Dili and at district level services
- Eight Orientation and Mobility trainers participated in Training of Trainers

Papua New Guinea

Avoidable blindness is being tackled with training to eye health staff, clinics to provide eye health services, access to glasses and providing surgeries and other interventions to tackle leading causes of blindness such as cataracts.

Program

ICEE: Strengthening eye care services in Papua New Guinea

Results

- Three refractionists, three workshop operators and six spectacle technicians trained in Papua New Guinea

Solomon Islands

Hospitals and eye clinics are being upgraded and a screening program is detecting and reducing childhood blindness. Refraction and dispensary services are ensuring that anyone who needs glasses is able to access them.

Program

Foresight Australia: Upgrade of national Vision Centres

Results

- In Solomon Islands, over 750 refraction errors were identified and spectacles provided
- Ophthalmic nurses in Auki, Kira Kira, Honiara and Gizo, and two nurses from the National Referral Hospital received training in refraction, dispensing skills, low vision assessment and administrative processes

Samoa

Childhood blindness is being reduced through a screening program that detects vision impairment as early as possible. Sustainable long-term infrastructure and human resources are being developed in remote areas so the most disadvantaged people have access to eye health services.

Program

Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children (RIDBC): Continuing development of eye health services and capacity in Samoa

Results

- In Samoa, refractive error screening was undertaken in 12 schools with 1,034 students screened. Upgrading of a spectacle workshop and training of technicians commenced

Fiji

A national plan for vision impaired children is being developed and implemented with the Fijian Government. It will address the unique health, rehabilitation and education needs of children and enhance the capacity of local staff.

Program

RIDBC: Capacity building in early childhood care and education for young children who are vision impaired

Results

- Capacity building in Early Childhood Care and Education provided to Fiji Ministry of Education, Fiji Ministry of Health and Fiji Society for the Blind

Regional

Across the region eye health coordination is being strengthened. This includes engaging with government and non-government stakeholders to enhance advocacy, and analysing education and training resources to enhance multilingual curriculums and improve eye health and vision care services.

Programs

Centre for Eye Research Australia (CERA): Regional training resource. Research Support Agency for Vietnam – Australia Vision Support Program

CBM Australia: Strengthening Western Pacific regional coordination

The Vision 2020 Australia Global Consortium member agencies:

CBM Australia
Centre for Eye Research Australia
Foresight Australia
The Fred Hollows Foundation
International Centre for Eyecare Education
Royal Australasian College of Surgeons
The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists
Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children
Vision Australia

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cbm together we can do more

Centre for Eye Research Australia

foresight AUSTRALIA

The Fred Hollows Foundation

ICEE www.icee.org

Royal Australasian College of Surgeons

RANZCO

Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children

vision australia blindness and low vision services

Australian Government AusAID

An Australian Government, AusAID initiative

Australian AID

An Australian partnership working to eliminate avoidable blindness and reduce the impact of vision loss in our region

About Vision 2020 Australia

Established in October 2000, Vision 2020 Australia is part of VISION 2020: The Right to Sight, a global initiative of the World Health Organisation and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness.

Vision 2020 Australia is the peak body for the eye health and vision care sector, leading advocacy efforts within Australia and globally, and raising community awareness about eye health and vision care. We provide a collaborative platform for our members—representing over 60 member organisations involved in local and global eye care, health promotion, low vision support, vision rehabilitation, eye research, professional assistance and community support.

For more information on the Global Consortium please contact Vision 2020 Australia on 03 9656 2020

www.vision2020australia.org.au

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