



WORLD SIGHT DAY 2020



HON. MUTAHI KAGWE, EGH
Cabinet Secretary,
Ministry of Health

MESSAGE FROM THE CABINET SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF HEALTH

This year as we mark world sight day, the Ministry of health confirms that we have a master plan for eye health: The National Eye Health Strategic Plan 2020-2025 to be launched in the next few weeks. This is a medium term plan for eye health that outlines the road map to the achievement of highest attainable standards of eye health.

Annually World sight day is marked on the second Thursday of October. This is a day we both celebrate achievements to date and advocate for increasing attention and investments towards eye care.

Globally, at least 2.2 billion people have a vision impairment or blindness, and of these, at least 1 billion people have a vision impairment that

could have been prevented or is yet to be addressed. As usual, this burden is not borne equally. It weighs more heavily on low- and middle-income countries, on older people, and on rural communities. This complicates the already stretched economies due to the associated losses of incomes and unproductivity associated with blindness. These are also the countries with limited access to health and eye care services, highest out of pocket payment for health and highest burden of poverty.

In Kenya, out of 7.5 million persons in need of eye care services, 250,000 are living with blindness. Blindness comes with a lot of psycho-social and economic implications. The leading causes blindness include age related cataract,

trachoma, glaucoma, refractive errors (short sight or long sight) and childhood eye diseases. Most of these conditions and diseases (80%) have cost effective solutions for example age related Cataract, is treated with simple surgical operation, usually with good outcome. Trachoma is preventable by simple measures like environmental and personal hygiene. Refractive errors (short sight/Long sight) form the leading cause of visual impairment. Persons (frequently children) with these conditions can benefit easily by correction with spectacles; with very immediate and life-long significant impacts. Most affected in this situation is the school going children, who are needlessly denied opportunities to excel in school

due to visual impairment. Eyes for these children tested early and corrected, open the world for the school going children.

With development, more people being educated and technology, there are more persons seeking for higher quality of life through good sight. Out of the 7.5 million who need eye care services, only about 20% are able to access eye care services, and the quality of service received is not assured.

While the demand of eye care services is low, there is also inefficiencies in the eye health systems, including limited skilled workforce, limited training capacity, poor irrational distribution poor productivity and sub optimal quality of care

REMARKS WHO COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVE, KENYA

Remarks During The Commemoration Of World Sight Day
Kitale Referral Hospital, Trans Nzoia County 08 October 2020
By: Dr Rudolf Eggers, Who Country Representative, Kenya

The CAS: Dr. Rashid Aman, All Protocol Observed
It is with great pleasure to join you today as the country commemorates this year's World Sight Day under the theme "Hope in sight" with the aim to draw attention to a range of issues surrounding blindness and visual impairment. Globally, at least 1 billion people have a preventable vision impairment or one that has yet to be addressed. The leading causes of vision impairment and blindness are uncorrected refractive errors and cataracts and the majority of people with vision impairment and blindness are over the age of 50 years.

Reduced or absent eyesight can have major and long-lasting effects on all aspects of life, including daily personal activities, interacting with the community, school and work opportunities and the ability to access public services. The main aims of this day include raising public awareness of issues surrounding blindness and visual impairment, influence Governments, and particularly Health Ministers to participate in and donate funds to blindness prevention programmes, educate the general public about blindness prevention and generate support for Vision 2020 programme and activities.

Am glad to note that the ministry plans to launch the National Eye Health Strategic Plan 2020-2025 in the next few weeks and notify the public on the recently released WHO report on Vision. In 2019, on the world sight day, the first world report on vision was launched globally in Geneva. This was done to generate awareness and increased political commitment and investment to strengthen eye care globally. This report emphasizes on integrating and scaling up person centered eye care, entrenched onto the health systems and based on primary health care. I wish to congratulate the government as they adopt and launch this report together with the National Eye Health Strategic plan soon, confirming the Kenya's commitment to the global efforts towards eye care. Lets all join hands and by building on vision 2020 global Initiative achievements, promote eye health, prevent eye infections and manage corrective eye conditions promptly. The World Health Organization will continue to give necessary support to the Ministry towards realization of the recommendations of the report. I thank you for your attention.

The National Strategic Plan for eye health 2020-2025

In the next few weeks my ministry will be launching a master plan; The National Strategic Plan for Eye Health 2020-2025, to improve and scale up delivery of eye care services in Kenya in the coming five years. This policy document was developed, following extensive consultations with key players in eye health and the wider health sector. It was also strongly informed by current global agenda, as articulated in the world report on vision, evidence generated from recent studies and evaluation of previous achievement. The plan focusses on strengthening the capacity of the health system to deliver eye health. In addition, it has adopted an integrated people-centered approach and through primary health

care. Innovation, research and evidence based service delivery and continuous quality improvement has been priorities as key drivers of the plan to its realization. Some of the innovative approach to delivery of eye care proposed in the plan include m-health digital health interventions, and collegiate model of training eye health workers

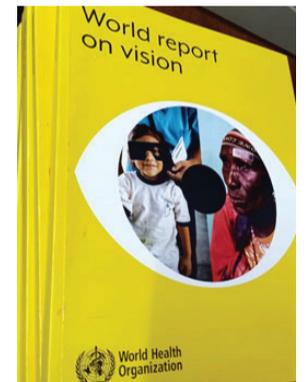
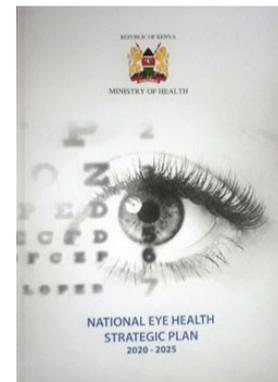
This plan will serve as a guide for prioritizing eye health, resource mobilization and eye health planning at the county level. The Ministry is committed to investing and facilitating the implementation of this eye health plan as the returns benefits of preventing blindness is enormous.

In the last 20 years, under the watch of "Vision 2020, the right to sight

Initiative", significant milestones have been achieved, some of which includes tripling the capacity to deliver quality eye care and doubling the consumption of eye health services. This has been possible by continued and coordinated support from our partners. This partnership will be further enhanced in this new plan, to even include the private sector as the route towards Universal Health Coverage.

World Report on Vision: Recommendations

1. **Make eye care an integral part of universal health coverage.**
2. **Implement integrated people-centred eye care in health systems; a continuum of promotive, preventive, treatment and rehabilitative interventions to address the full spectrum of eye conditions**
3. **Promote high-quality implementation and health systems research complementing existing evidence for effective eye care interventions; particularly regarding met and unmet eye care needs, so that we can plan services and monitor progress effectively.**
4. **Monitor trends and evaluate progress towards implementing integrated people-centred eye care.**
5. **Raise awareness and engage and empower people and communities about eye care needs.**



World report on Vision

Last year (2019) on the world sight day the first world report on vision was launched in Geneva. This was done to generate awareness and increased political commitment and investment to strengthen eye care globally. We as a Ministry have adopted it and we shall also be launching it in Kenya soon as our commitment towards the global agenda

The benefits of blindness prevention

Investing in prevention and treatment of visual impairment is equated to maintaining a more productive aging population, who are mobile, engaged in some economic activities,

independent and will not need extra care, thus contribute positively to the economy of the country. The economic benefits of age related cataract surgery and other blindness prevention interventions studied in Kenya, and other parts of the world, reports four fold returns on investment. The National Strategic Plan for Eye Health 2020-2025, proposes an investment of ksh 5.7 billion, with expected four-fold return (ksh.22 billion) in five years. While blindness is found to be higher among the poor communities, it means that these interventions are tools for poverty alleviation, in line with Vision 2030, and the SDGs.



Patient having Eyes Tested in the Kitale County Referral Hospital Eye Unit, with modern equipment