World leaders commit landmark US$1bn+ to tackle avoidable sight loss worldwide

Inaugural Global Summit for Eye Health secures 200 historic multi-partner commitments to expand access to screening, spectacles, and treatment for hundreds of millions of people.

- Over US$1 billion in domestic funding allocated by governments to make eye care a core component of national health systems, insurance coverage and public spending.
- Delegations from over 40 countries unite behind ambitious national commitments led by Indonesia ($600m), Nepal ($240m), Bangladesh ($129m), Rwanda ($82m), and Cambodia ($20m).
- Every US$1 invested in eye health in low-and middle-income countries generates a return of up to US$28.
- WHO launches 'SEE 2045 Cataract Elimination Initiative', making cataract only the second noncommunicable condition in WHO history to have a global elimination target
- Outcomes from government commitments also include over 68 million glasses distributed to underserved communities and over 13 million sight-restoring cataract surgeries delivered.
- The Summit delivered 200 commitments in total, with many focusing on improving child eye health (95) and access to glasses (88).

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA, 3 Nov 2026 - World leaders and government ministers at the inaugural Global Summit for Eye Health agreed a historic package to tackle avoidable vision loss worldwide, with more than 40 governments committing over US$1 billion in domestic funding to improve access to eye care screening, spectacles and treatment. The 200 commitments, many of which focus on improving child eye health (95) and access to glasses (88), are also set to deliver 68 million pairs of glasses to underserved communities and 13 million sight-restoring cataract surgeries.

Convened by IAPB, hosted by the Government of Antigua and Barbuda and co-hosted by the Governments of Bangladesh, Guyana, Ireland and Nigeria in technical collaboration with WHO, the Summit brought together national governments, including 13 heads of state and government, alongside health leaders, development partners, businesses and advocates behind a shared objective to accelerate universal access to eye care.

More than one billion people worldwide live with preventable or treatable vision loss. The delegations present at the Summit represented over 60% of the world's population, including countries such as Bangladesh, China, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria and Rwanda.

Independently validated through a WHO-led process, the total package covers health system integration, policy reform, service delivery, and direct financial investment. Together, government commitments announced at the Summit include:

- **World Health Organisation (WHO):** Antigua and Barbuda, Bangladesh, China, Kenya, and Nigeria were announced as the first countries participating in the WHO SEE 2045 Cataract Elimination Initiative, a global effort to eliminate cataract as a public health problem by 2045.

- **UNICEF:** UNICEF will support governments in 25 countries to strengthen and scale child vision screening through integrated health, education and community systems.
- **Bangladesh:** US$129 million to embed comprehensive eye care into its Universal Health Coverage benefit package for 20 million people.
- **Indonesia:** US$600 million to integrate eye health across primary care and Vision Centres, school health services, community and occupational health platforms, reaching more than 50 million people by 2030.
- **Nepal:** US$240 million to advance universal eye care, raising effective cataract surgical coverage to 70% and expanding presbyopia care across all 77 districts.
- **Nigeria:** Primary eye care integration across health facilities to reach 25 million people, including training 10,000 health workers, dispensing 5 million reading glasses, and delivering 25,000 subsidised cataract surgeries.
- **Pakistan:** Primary eye care expansion for 60 million people by establishing 150 Rural Health Centres as Advanced Primary Eye Care hubs.
- **Rwanda:** US$78 million for its National Strategic Plan for Eye Health, alongside a US$4.1 million health insurance commitment to make ready-made reading glasses a reimbursable benefit (Mutuelle de Santé).
- **Sierra Leone:** US$3 million to reach 1 million citizens by 2030, pioneering the integration of eye care into national health security and epidemic preparedness frameworks to treat ocular complications from Ebola and mpox across 75% of primary health units.

The national commitments reflect growing recognition among finance and health ministers that eye health is a primary driver of economic development. Research indicates that every US$1 invested in eye health in low- and middle-income countries generates up to US$28 in economic returns through increased workplace productivity, extended working lives, and improved educational outcomes. By integrating eye care into national health systems and schools, the package agreed in Antigua and Barbuda aims to deliver substantial economic and social gains across lower-and middle-income nations over the coming decade.

Overall, the Summit also saw multi-million-dollar commitments from 143 non-government stakeholders. These include organisations including 15 private sector companies, 91 NGOs/ INGOs, 13 professional/ regulatory bodies, 10 academic and research institutions, 7 health facilities, 4 philanthropic organisations, and 3 international and multinational organisations. These cover a broad range of eye care facilities, including expanding service delivery, scaling up spectacle distribution, and training frontline healthcare workers.

Dr. Søren Brostrøm, Director, Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health, WHO, said: “Restoring a person's sight with a pair of spectacles or offering cataract surgeries is actually one of the most rewarding, but also one of the most cost-effective interventions we know in health [and]one of the best returns on investment. Yet these interventions, spectacles, cataract surgery, et cetera, remain out of reach for millions of people, even billions, around the world. That [is why] I'm happy to announce that today we are launching a new WHO global initiative, with a very bold ambition of eliminating cataract-related vision loss as a public health problem by 2045.”

Gopal Mitra, Global Lead on Disability and Development, UNICEF, said: “No one actor can address this ambition alone; we have to align political commitment, national technical capacity and investments. Together we can ensure that every child has the opportunity to see, to learn, and to participate.”

Peter Holland, CEO, IAPB, said: “The Global Summit for Eye Health marks a defining moment for global eye health. Never before have so many governments, organisations, and private sector leaders come together around a shared commitment to expand access to sight-saving care. The package of commitments announced this week will improve the lives of hundreds of millions of people and help them go to school, stay in work, care for their families, and participate fully in society. It demonstrates growing recognition that investing in eye health is an investment in human potential, economic growth, and sustainable development.”

Gaston Browne, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, said: “Today, the global community has taken a decisive step towards consigning avoidable blindness to history. The commitments announced at this Summit demonstrate what is possible when governments, international organisations, civil society and the private sector come together behind a shared vision. Antigua and Barbuda is proud to have hosted this landmark gathering, which has created a clear pathway to improve millions of lives, strengthen economies and ensure that sight-saving care reaches those who need it most.”

Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Edinburgh, Global Ambassador for IAPB, said: “The treatment of avoidable blindness is as imperative as any other health challenge. Not only does it prevent individuals from losing their window onto the world, curtailing life chances and choices, but if treated with low-cost and effective interventions, there are… huge returns to be had.”

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NOTES TO EDITORS

The full package of commitments is available on the Global Summit for Eye Health Portal: commitments.globalsummitforeyehealth.org/

Please **contact the press office at iapb@89up.org for interviews** with the following spokespeople:

- Peter Holland, CEO, IAPB
- Dr. M. A. Muhit (Mohammad Abdul Muhit), State Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Bangladesh
- Dr. Jalikatu Mustapha, Deputy Minister of Health II, Sierra Leone.
- Jeff Wallace, Comms Director, Cure Blindness. Their commitment is to invest $115 million to improve the sight of over 7 million people through screening, treatment and surgery.

Pictures and videos will be available here: **https://app.air.inc/a/mccce28e5**

Additional national government commitments validated by WHO

Africa

- **Ethiopia:** Scaling up community-based eye screenings to reach 41 million people, strengthening more than 3,200 primary healthcare units, improving cataract surgical quality, and conducting a national eye health survey.
- **Chad:** US$1.5 million to authorise community health workers to conduct near-vision screening, train 1,500 community health workers, and enact tariff and import duty exemptions on reading glasses.

- **Mauritania:** US$500,000 to integrate presbyopia screening and reading glasses into essential primary care, targeting school teachers and vulnerable workers across Nouakchott before expanding nationwide.
- **Zambia:** US$2.5 million to scale up school screening to reach 2 million learners, dispense 200,000 reading glasses, and deliver 45,000 cataract surgeries.
- **Cameroon:** US$2.27 million dedicated budget line under Universal Health Coverage (CSU) to screen 100,000 diabetic patients for retinopathy annually and cover retinal exams and laser treatments.
- **Kenya:** Eliminating cataract-related blindness as a public health problem by 2045 by raising the Cataract Surgical Rate (CSR) to 2,000 per million by 2030, supported by national Social Health Authority (SHA) reimbursement.
- **Mozambique:** US$15 million to ensure universal access to adult near-vision correction, integrating presbyopia screening into primary healthcare and chronic disease consultations, training health workers, and targeting 80% coverage of reading glasses for adults in need aged 40 and older.
- **Nigeria:** Primary eye care integration across health facilities to reach 25 million people, including training 10,000 health workers, dispensing 5 million reading glasses, and delivering 25,000 subsidised cataract surgeries.
- **Rwanda:** US$78 million for its National Strategic Plan for Eye Health, alongside a US$4.1 million health insurance commitment to make ready-made reading glasses a reimbursable benefit (Mutuelle de Santé).
- **Sierra Leone:** US$3 million to reach 1 million citizens by 2030, pioneering the integration of eye care into national health security and epidemic preparedness frameworks to treat ocular complications from Ebola and mpox across 75% of primary health units.
- **Togo:** US$1 million to integrate eye health into national primary healthcare plans, screening 1 million school children (50,000 free glasses), delivering 25,000 cataract surgeries, and training 500 healthcare providers.
- **Uganda:** US$5 million (Ministry of Health) to increase national domestic eye health financing by 20%, equip 72% of General Hospitals and Health Centre IVs with primary eye care packages, and raise the Cataract Surgical Rate from 250 to 800 per million.
- **Zimbabwe:** US$3.5 million to decentralise primary eye care across all 10 provinces to reach 2 million people, perform 50,000 cataract surgeries (raising the Cataract Surgical Rate to 1,200 per million), screen 500,000 schoolchildren, dispense 100,000 spectacles, and equip 60 district hospitals.

Asia

- **Bangladesh:** US$129 million to embed comprehensive eye care into its Universal Health Coverage benefit package for 20 million people.
- **Bhutan:** US$2 million to raise effective cataract surgical coverage (eCSC) to 55% and effective refractive error coverage (eREC) to 85%, instituting mandatory vision screening for school entry, achieving 80% diabetic retinopathy screening, and considering tax waivers on spectacles.
- **Cambodia:** US$20 million to expand Public Vision Centres to 70% of public district hospitals and achieve 100% presbyopia service coverage across health centres by 2028.
- **India (Madhya Pradesh):** US$1.8 million to decentralise eye care across all 52 districts, task-shifting screening to frontline workers at 9,000 Ayushman Arogya Mandirs (AAMs) to screen 3 million people and dispense 1 million reading glasses.

- **India (Rajasthan):** US$2.57 million to launch 'Clear Vision Rajasthan,' screening two million people and delivering 700,000 free eyeglasses to vulnerable workers and schoolchildren across 41 districts.
- **Thailand:** Expanding nationwide child eye screening, extending Universal Health Coverage to provide free reading glasses to 5 million adults over 40, and scaling AI-supported diabetic retinopathy screening to 80% coverage.
- **Timor-Leste:** US$200,000 to increase eCSC to 60% and eREC to 80%, expanding cataract surgeries across regional hospitals and explicitly targeting 80% diabetic retinopathy screening among known diabetic populations by 2030.
- **Lao PDR:** US$5 million to integrate primary eye care into the national health sector strategy, updating clinical guidelines, and expanding cataract surgical capacity and refractive error coverage across district hospitals.
- **Maldives:** Embedding eye health indicators into the national health information system, expanding national health insurance for essential eye care and spectacles, raising eCSC to 85% and eREC to 90%, and achieving 80% diabetic retinopathy screening.
- **Pakistan (Punjab):** Screening 1 million school and out-of-school children, training 3,000 primary healthcare workers, establishing 30 new optometry clinics, and strengthening referral networks.
- **Papua New Guinea:** Establishing the new Centre for Eye Health in PNG (backed by AUD $2.8 million from Australia) to expand access to high-quality eye care, cataract surgery, and workforce development nationwide.
- **Vietnam:** Developing national policy frameworks for presbyopia, near-vision spectacles, and diabetic retinopathy care, updating clinical guidelines, and implementing quality standards for refractive services across all health facility levels.

South America

- **Peru:** US$8.4 million combined across the Ministry of Health (MINSA) and the Instituto Nacional de Oftalmología (INO) to integrate presbyopia care into primary health care and implement a national cataract surgery plan targeting 60,000 surgeries in vulnerable regions.

Oceania

- **Solomon Islands:** Conducting a nationally representative Rapid Assessment of Avoidable Blindness (RAAB7) by December 2028 to establish evidence-based national eye health priorities.
- **Cook Islands:** Strengthening primary eye care services, expanding access to spectacles in Rarotonga and Pa Enua, integrating diabetic retinopathy screening into routine diabetes care, and embedding eye recording into Medtech.