

### 13. Integrated people-centered eye care, including preventable vision impairment and blindness

#### Statement:

We welcome the efforts of WHO on eye-care. Comprehensive indicators are required to track changes in the availability, accessibility and quality of eye care services in countries. The global targets recommended for the increase in effective coverage of refractive error and cataract surgical coverage by 2030 seem arbitrary. The report has excluded key indicators of the framework in monitoring these two targets.

We are concerned that the suggested indicators should not pave the way for fragmenting eye care services, or lead to 'condition-specific' vertical programs, eventually resulting in the privatisation of eye-care services. Publicly delivered comprehensive eye care services, beginning with early screening, and diagnosis for other conditions are crucial. To ensure a continuum of care the monitoring mechanism must include data on strengthening of vision rehabilitation services at community level and access to assistive devices to people with untreated vision impairment and blindness.

The discussion paper identifies the private sector as a stakeholder, yet fails to mention the lack of availability of eye care services in public health systems as a major barrier to access in low and middle income countries. The indicators delineated need to focus on building and supporting primary health care, and designing service priorities on life-course needs, with accountability mechanisms in place.

We reiterate the pressing need to strengthen the public health system for providing primary care and to work closely with communities on social and environmental determinants of ocular health.

Free and high-quality refractive screening, spectacle disbursement and surgeries should be prioritised. Member States must ensure training of the health workforce, access to diagnostics and screening facilities at the primary level to ensure access in regions with difficult topography. Community health workers and communities must play a prominent role in this process.