

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2904

ANSWERED ON:26.11.2010

CASES OF BLINDNESS

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Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether India is one of the countries worst affected by blindness in the world;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor alongwith the number of blind persons, particularly in rural and tribal areas of the country, State/UT-wise;
- (c) the major initiatives/projects undertaken by the Government under the National Programme for Control of Blindness and the financial assistance provided thereunder during each of the last three years and the current year, State/UTwise;
- (d) whether the Government has monitored/assessed the performance of the said programme;
- (e) if so, the shortcomings noticed and the follow up action taken thereon;
- (f) whether the Government proposes to make cataract-free India with the help of World Health Organisation (WHO); and
- (g) if so, the details thereof?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI DINESH TRIVEDI)

(a): As per the Survey-2001-04 conducted under the National Programme for Control of Blindness (NPCB) in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, there were around 12 million blind persons (Visual Acuity <6/60) in the country.

As per the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates (Global data on visual impairment in the year 2002), out of total 37 million blind persons (Visual Acuity <3/60) in the world, 6.7 million are in India, which is around one-sixth of the total global blind population. As per the estimates, there were 6.9 million blind persons in China which is higher than India.

(b): Cataract is the leading cause of blindness, accounting for 62.6% of the total cases of blindness in the country. Due to increase in population and expectancy of life over the years, the volume of cataract cases in the country has also increased. Secondly, since India is a tropical country, the incidence of cataract is quite high.

A statement showing estimated number of blind persons in the country, State/ UT-wise, is given at ANNEXURE-I.

(c): The major initiative/projects undertaken under NPCB to eliminate avoidable blindness from the country include:

Revamping Medical Education;

Ensuring optimal utilization of Human Resources;

Improving quality of services;

Preventive Eye care;

Coverage of underserved areas for eye care services through public-private partnership;

Development of eye care infrastructure;

To make eye care comprehensive, besides cataract surgery, assistance for other eye diseases like, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma management, laser techniques, corneal transplantation, vitreo-retinal surgery, treatment of childhood blindness etc.;

Regular monitoring and evaluation;

Better quality of services.

A statement showing the financial assistance provided, State/UT-wise, under NPCB during the last three years and the current year is given at ANNEXURE-II.

(d) & (e): The Programme is constantly monitored and assessed through multiple monitoring mechanism including analysis of structured monthly and quarterly reports, officials visits by the concerned officers, periodical review meeting at centre and state level, Health Management Information System (HMIS), Performance Audit by CAG, Mid-term Appraisal by the Planning commission etc. The progress and efficiency of the Programme is reviewed with the States in various review meetings and forums like dissemination workshops to avoid any shortcomings in implementation of the Programme.

(f) & (g): NPCB is committed to reduce the burden of avoidable blindness in the country including blindness due to cataract to 0.3% by the year 2020 by adopting strategies advocated for Vision 2020: The Right to Sight. The Programme is sustained entirely through the domestic budget for implementation of eye care activities in the country. World Health Organisation (WHO) has been providing technical support for some of the eye care activities.