

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:908
ANSWERED ON:01.03.2013
CASES OF BLINDNESS
Rana Shri Jagdish Singh

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

- (a) whether India is one of the countries worst affected by blindness;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;
- (c) the number of blind persons in the country, particularly in the rural areas, State/UT-wise;
- (d) the funds allocated and spent to deal with the problem of blindness during each of the last three years and the current year, State/UT-wise; and
- (e) the steps taken or proposed to be taken by the Government to check the rising number of cases of blindness in the country?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI ABU HASEM KHAN CHOUDHURY)

(a) & (b): As per estimates, based on the survey 2001-04 conducted under the National Programme for Control of Blindness, there are 12 million blind people in the country (visual acuity less than 6/60 in the better eye with available correction).

As per the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates (Global Data on Visual Impairment 2010) out of the total 39.36 million blind persons (Visual Acuity <3/60) in the world, 8.07 million are in India.

Cataract is the major cause of blindness in India, responsible for around two third of blindness. Rising population over the years with high life expectancy is the major reason for increase of blind population in the country.

(c) A statement showing estimated number of blind persons in the country, State/UT-wise, on the basis of survey conducted under National Programme for Control of Blindness, is given at Annexure-I.

(d) A statement showing funds allocated and spent under the National Programme for Control of Blindness (NPCB) during 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12 and the current year (2012-13 till date), State/UT-wise, is given at Annexure-II.

(e) The steps taken/major activities undertaken under National Programme for Control of Blindness to check the rising number of cases of blindness in the country include:

i) Reduction in the backlog of blind persons by active screening of population by organizing screening eye camps and transporting operable cases to fixed eye-care facilities for operation/treatment;

ii) Performance of cataract operations through Government and Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Eye Hospitals;

iii) Treatment of other eye diseases like, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma management, laser techniques, corneal transplantation, vitreo-retinal surgery, treatment of childhood blindness etc. as new initiatives;

iv) Involvement of private practitioners in eye care services;

v) Screening of children for identification and treatment of refractive errors and distribution of free spectacles to those suffering from refractive errors under School Eye Screening Programme;

vi) Collection of donated eyes for corneal transplantation and development/strengthening of eye banking services;

vii) In-service training to eye surgeons in various fields of ophthalmology for development of skills;

viii) Strengthening/developing of eye-care infrastructure at various levels to improve quantity and quality of eye-care services.