

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2558  
ANSWERED ON:25.07.2014  
CASES OF BLINDNESS  
Nete Shri Ashok Mahadeorao

**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 visually impaired persons in the country, particularly in the rural and tribal areas, State/UT-wise;
- (d) the funds allocated and spent to deal with 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 HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. HARSH VARDHAN)

(a) & (b): (i) As per World Health Organization (WHO) estimates (Global Data on Visual Impairments 2010), out of total 39.365 million blind persons (Visual Acuity <3/60) in the world, 8.075 million are in India, which is around one-fifth of the total global blind population.

(ii) As per the Rapid Survey on Avoidable Blindness conducted under the National Programme for Control of Blindness (NPCB) by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare during 2006-07, the prevalence of blinds in India, was found to be 1% (as per NPCB definition Visual Acuity ( 6/60). However, 85% of these cases comprised avoidable blindness on account of cataract, refractive errors, etc. The prevalence of blindness in the country after exclusion of such cases is at par with other South-East Asian countries.

(c): A statement showing the estimated number of blind persons in the country State/UT-wise as per the Survey-2001-02 conducted under NPCB is at Annexure I.

(d): The details of fund allocated and expenditure incurred under the NPCB during 2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15 up to June, 2014, State/UT-wise are given at Annexure II.

(e): The steps taken to check the rising number of cases of blindness in the country include:

- (i) Decentralized implementation of NPCB through State/District Health Societies for close monitoring and supervision;
- (ii) Provision for free cataract operations through Government and identified NGO Eye Hospitals;
- (iii) Distribution of free spectacles to school children suffering from refractive errors under School Eye Screening Programme; (iv) Collection of donated eyes for corneal transplantation; (v) To make eye-care more comprehensive, besides cataract surgery, provision of assistance for management and treatment of other eye diseases like diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, corneal transplantation, vitreo-retinal surgery, treatment of childhood blindness etc.; (vi) Provision for distribution of free spectacles to old persons suffering from presbyopia; (vii) Provision for setting up Multipurpose District Mobile Ophthalmic Units in District Hospitals for better coverage; (viii) Ensuring optimal placement of available human resources on contractual basis, wherever required; (ix) Improving quality of eye-care services; (x) Preventive Eye care; (xi) Coverage of underserved areas for eye-care services through public-private partnership; (xii) Development/strengthening of eye-care infrastructure, particularly in North-East and other under developed State; (xiii) Regular monitoring and evaluation.