

Abstract

Since 1974, when the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) was founded, international campaigns for blindness prevention have gained tremendous momentum in collaboration with the WHO's blindness prevention programme. In 1999 WHO and IAPB launched the campaign Vision 2020, The Right to Sight, in which WHO, IAPB, member countries of WHO and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that are active in this field are all working together. The major emphasis of the programme is on control of the major disorders leading to blindness and the development of infrastructures, of eye care programmes and of training and continuing education for ophthalmic staff. This campaign is unique in medicine and has the potential for reducing the prevalence of blindness in the world significantly by 2020. Even now, we can assume that 75-80% of cases of blindness can be prevented. The WHO has developed strategies for dealing with individual diseases, such as trachoma, onchocerciasis, childhood blindness and refractive errors. Programmes for glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy will follow. Early successes can already be recognized, especially in the rising numbers of cataract operations.