



**CCB/ EYE CARE CARIBBEAN
CARIBBEAN COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND
&**

THE FOUNDATION FOR EYE CARE IN THE CARIBBEAN

“Preventing blindness and visual impairment; while restoring sight and creating opportunities for persons whose sight cannot be restored”.

Lower All Saints Road - P.O. Box 1517 - Antigua, West Indies

Tel: 1-(268)-462-4111/462-6369/562-2216

Fax: (268)-462-6371

**E-mail: arvel.grant@eyecarecaribbean.com; carolyn.gopaul@eyecarecaribbean.com;
frank.bowen@eyecarecaribbean.com ; keva.richards@eyecarecaribbean.com**

Website: www.eyecarecaribbean.com (or) www.ccb1967.com

**“DELIVERING V2020: THE RIGHT TO SIGHT
BY
MAKING QUALITY EYE HEALTH SERVICES AFFORDABLE
AVAILABLE AND ACCESSIBLE TO ALL”**

1. BACKGROUND:

1.1 Vision 2020: The Right to Sight - is a global initiative. The programme is guided by a series of World Health Assembly (WHA) Resolutions, including:

Reference - WHA Resolutions 56.26, 59.25 and 62.1

- The Resolution of the World Health Assembly on the Elimination of Avoidable Blindness – WHA 56.26 – May 28th, 2003;
- The Resolution of the World Health Assembly on the Prevention of Avoidable Blindness and Visual Impairment – WHA 59.25 – May 27th, 2006;
- The Resolution of the World Health Assembly on the Prevention of Avoidable Blindness and Visual Impairment – WHA 62.1 – May 21st, 2009.

1.2 The Global Initiative was launched (in Geneva) in 1999 by a coalition involving: The World Health Organisation (WHO) and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB).

1.3 CCB-Eye Care Caribbean coordinated the launch of the regional initiative in the Caribbean in July 2000, under the patronage of the then Minister of Health of the Republic of Trinidad & Tobago. The key Stakeholders in the Caribbean are:

- PAHO-WHO representing Ministries of Health and Governments of CARICOM;
- International NGO's supporting work in Blindness Prevention and Sight Restoration across the Caribbean; and
- CCB-Eye Care Caribbean (a joint effort of, The Foundation for Eye Care in the Caribbean (Eye Care Caribbean) and the Caribbean Council for the Blind (CCB). representing the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness in the Region.

1.4 By 2003, CCB-Eye Care Caribbean (in collaboration with PAHO-WHO and Sightsavers) launched the first Strategic Plan for Vision 2020: The Right to Sight for the Caribbean. The Plan prioritized the following conditions as critical if unavoidable visual impairment and blindness are to be eliminated across the Caribbean:

- Refractive Errors (and Low Vision);
- Cataract
- Diabetic Retinopathy;
- Glaucoma; and,
- The group of conditions which cause visual impairment and blindness in children across the region (Childhood Blindness).

1.5 Since then, CCB-Eye Care Caribbean facilitated the implementation of V2020: The Right To Sight - in the Caribbean by:

- Providing technical and financial assistance re: development or implementation of National Prevention of Blindness Plans or Programmes in eight (8) countries;
 - Assisting with the development of Secondary and Tertiary-level Eye Health Services in more than twenty (20) Public Hospitals across the region;
- (Those initiatives include implementation of programmes to make prescription glasses more affordable and accessible, in 14 hospitals and clinics across: St. Lucia, Guyana and Jamaica).

- Development and testing of a Manual for the training of Primary Health Care Workers in primary level Eye Care Practices.
- Implementation of a Diabetic Retinopathy screening pilot in the Commonwealth of Dominica;
- Development of cataract surgical Programmes in: St. Lucia, Jamaica, Guyana and Artibonite, Haiti.
- Implementation of several glaucoma KAPB studies in Jamaica and the preparation for implementation of similar studies across the Caribbean.
- The development and launch of the B.Sc in Optometry, at the University of Guyana and exploration of similar partnerships with other universities, across the Caribbean.

1.6 In 2008, CCB-Eye Care Caribbean participated in a series of technical meetings at the Headquarters of PAHO-WHO in Washington, D.C. leading to the preparation of a set of Strategic Guidelines for the continuing development of Vision 2020 Activities across the Caribbean and the Americas.

1.7 In 2009, the Executive Committee and Directing Council of PAHO approved the Vision 2020 Strategic Guidelines (for the Prevention of Avoidable Blindness) for the Caribbean and the Americas.

1.7.1 Later that year, A # of international NGOs met with stakeholders from MOHs and Caribbean NGOs, to finalize inputs to the Vision 2020 Strategic Frame Work for the Caribbean. The document is now available at www.eyecarecaribbean.com/vision2020/strategicframework

1.8 CCB-Eye Care Caribbean is committed to working with the Government and people of your country (and the rest of CARICOM) to help the country and region become Vision 2020 compliant.

2. JUSTIFICATION:

2.1 At the launch of Vision 2020: The Right to Sight in the Caribbean, five (5) priority diseases which cause blindness or severe visual impairment were identified for special emphasis:

- Refractive Errors;
- Cataract;
- Diabetic Retinopathy;
- Glaucoma, and
- The group of conditions which cause blindness and visual impairment in children.

2.2 Refractive Errors are a group of important “gate way” conditions. Since, the overwhelming majority of persons with abnormal vision, are affected by them, they provide a good basis on which to identify all the other conditions which may lead to blindness.

2.3 The prevalence of visual impairment in children increases dramatically during puberty and teenage years, primarily because of the dramatic and (sometimes) abnormal growth which takes place during puberty. This sometimes lead to growth affecting the: shape and or length of the eye-ball (impairing the precision requirements of the visual part way). Such developments often lead to refractive errors in affected children.

2.3.1 It is estimated that at least 15% of persons 11 years or older, need prescription glasses to correct their vision. That means that, at least 15 of every 100 children (in school) could be under-performing, because of limited vision. Making prescription glasses more: Affordable accessible and available, will level the playing field” for them.

2.4 It is estimated that more than 80% of persons over 40 years, need to wear eye glasses, to correct visual impairment due to aging. Unless ways are found to make quality eye glasses more affordable and accessible, a disproportionate number of persons 40 years or older, is reduced to a poorer quality of life and heightened exposure to increased accidents and physical injury.

2.5 Most importantly, because: Cataract, Diabetic Retinopathy and Glaucoma are age related diseases, The availability of quality and affordable eyeglasses, increases the likelihood that more persons (over forty) will have their eyes examined.

2.6 Therefore, an effective strategy for the identification and treatment of the major causes of blindness and visual impairment, is likely to be most successful, if it is built on, the provision of quality and affordable eye glasses, based on:

- The use of acceptable methods of screening;
- Eye examinations, leading to:
- Prescription and supply of affordable eye glasses and
- referral for treatment of conditions such as cataract, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma and conditions which cause blindness in children.

3. IMPLEMENTING A SITUATION ANALYSIS OF EYE HEALTH SERVICES IN YOUR COUNTRY:

3.1 CCB-Eye Care Caribbean collaborated with PAHO-WHO to develop a template for the collection and updating of information relating to eye health and blindness services data.

3.2 As we prepare to invite your country to attend and participate in our annual Vision 2020 Working Group For The Caribbean; Please complete the attached situation analysis data sheet, and return to keva.richards@eyecarecaribbean.com
The end.