

Burden of Eye Problems in Ethiopia: projection from 2005 to 2015

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Eye problems are recognized among the major public health challenges in many developing countries. An international initiative called VISION 2020: The Right to Sight has been launched by the World Health Organization (WHO) and collaborating institutions in 1999 to eliminate the major causes of avoidable blindness by the year 2020 (1). Ethiopia launched the initiative in September 2002.

Although Ethiopia is believed to have one of the highest burdens of eye disease worldwide no recent data was available to guide the initiative.

The series of survey reports presented in this Ethiopian Journal of Health Development show the rationale, methodology and results of the national blindness, low vision and trachoma survey (1-3).

Table 1: Eye Disease Burden in Ethiopia: Projections for ten years

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Estimated Total Population	75028496	77204322	79443248	81747102	84117768	86557183	89067341	91650294	94308153	97043089	99857339
Number of individuals having Low vision	2776054	2856560	2939400	3024643	3112357	3202616	3295492	3391061	3489402	3590594	3694722
Number of individuals having Low vision due to cataract	1174271	1208325	1243366	1279424	1316527	1354706	1393993	1434419	1476017	1518821	1562867
No of individuals having Low vision due to Refractive error	960515	988370	1017032	1046526	1076876	1108105	1140240	1173307	1207333	1242346	1278374
Number of children having Active Trachoma	9034931	9296945	9566556	9843986	10129462	10423216	10725489	11036528	11356588	11685929	12024821
Number of individuals with Trichomatous Trichiasis (TT)	1255977	1292400	1329880	1368446	1408131	1448967	1490987	1534226	1578718	1624501	1671612
Number of Blind persons	1200456	1235269	1271092	1307954	1345884	1384915	1425077	1466405	1508930	1552689	1597717
Number Blind persons due to avoidable cause	1049198	1079625	1110934	1143151	1176303	1210416	1245518	1281638	1318805	1357051	1396405
Number of Blind persons due to cataract	600228	617635	635546	653977	672942	692457	712539	733202	754465	776345	798859

Source: National Blindness, Low Vision, and Trachoma Survey in Ethiopia. 2005-6.

As shown in Table one in 2008 about 3.02 million people are living with low vision; 1.30 million individuals are blind; 9.84 million children under ten-year are suffering from active trachoma; 1.36 million adults age 15 year and above are suffering from trichomatous trichiasis. Major causes of blindness and low vision are avoidable. This number of cases with eye problem is expected to increase yearly as

the population size continues to increase. Without timely action the number of cases will greatly accumulate and will pose serious challenges to the health care system that is already constrained by resource limitations.

The report clearly indicated the need to recognize eye problems; particularly blindness, low vision and trachoma, among the major

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public health problems of the country. The national program as well as the Vision 2020 initiative partners should take a full advantage of the available cost-effective interventions to address the problem. All partners and potential stakeholders must coordinate efforts to enhance the capacity of health care provider institutions by providing the necessary skills and resource to tackle the problem. Otherwise the loss of sight will remain to be a tragic experience for millions of Ethiopians.

Reference

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