



4TH INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE ON
**Small Island
Developing States**
27-30 MAY, 2024
ST. JOHN'S, ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

SIDS4 Conference Side Event

Delivering Universal Eye Care: Innovative capacity building to end avoidable sight loss, strengthen health system resiliency and accelerate progress towards the SDGs

27 May 2024 12:00-13:30

Room 2, American University of Antigua, St. Johns, Antigua

Organized by: The UN Friends of Vision Group and The International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness

Across the world's most challenging environments, health systems are struggling to deliver. With the prevalence of avoidable sight loss on the rise globally, resulting in widespread and profound implications for health, sustainable development, and the economy, Small Island States (SIDS) must work together across sectors to substantially expand eye health service capacity within Universal Health Coverage and unlock the potential for individual and shared progress. This event will convene an expert panel that will explore innovative strategies and initiatives, including collaborative networks and sustainable capacity building, that SIDS can employ to build comprehensive, accessible, equitable and resilient health care systems that increase universal access to essential eye health services and accelerate progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS).

Key Issues Discussed

- **Eye Health in SIDS:** Eye health is a universal issue that effects every country in the world. However, the burden of eye conditions and vision impairment is not borne equally, with SIDS' populations particularly vulnerable to the prevalence and causes of vision impairment and blindness.

- **UN Resolution Implementation:** The adoption of General Assembly resolution Vision for Everyone recognized the importance of vision as a foundation for sustainable development and committed the world to reaching the 1.1 billion people who do not have access to the eye health services that they need by 2030. To fulfill its commitment, the international community must harness the momentum created at the global level to catalyse national action, foster multi-sector collaboration and mobilise resources on a new scale.
- **Prioritizing Eye Health:** Healthy vision is frequently not recognized for its cross-cutting contributions. Increased reporting, data sharing, and financing on eye health within SIDS is required to accelerate progress and to ensure eye health is integrated into future global development agendas to enhance overall health and well-being.
- **Building Health System Capacity:** Human Resources and technological solutions are critical to ensuring that the underserved have access to the services they need. The technology to address 90% of eye health issues already exists. We must encourage the transfer of technology from developed countries to developing countries, on mutually agreed terms, to advance access to eye care services and assistive technologies in order to maximise the potential of technology to improve coverage, accessibility, effectiveness, efficiency, and affordability of eye health services in SIDS
- **The Role of Partnerships and Networks:** No single entity or organisation can implement accessible, resilient, and sustainable systems to address the growing needs around eye health and the interconnected social and economic challenges; particularly in SIDS. Mobilizing global action amongst all stakeholders is required

Key Recommendations for Action

- Advance national implementation of UN General Assembly resolution Vision for Everyone
- Identify strategies to build comprehensive, accessible, equitable and resilient health care systems in SIDS that increase universal access to essential eye health services and achieve the SDGs
- Implement people-centred services, addressing the needs of marginalized and vulnerable groups, and service expansion, in terms of technological resources, human resources and eye specific health workforces
- Build synergies between the eye health sector and other development priorities to elevate eye health across the UN's sustainable development agenda
- Mobilize political leadership and support for the proposed 2026 Global Eye Health Summit to help reach 1.1 billion without access to services and end avoidable sight-loss