

EDITORIAL**The Burden of Visual Impairment and Efforts to Curve it Down****Abraham Haileamlak, MD, Professor of Pediatrics and Child Health**DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ejhs.v32i5.1>

Globally, about 1.1 billion people are living with some degree of visual impairment. When disintegrated by the degree of impairment; 295 million people are living with moderate to severe vision impairment (3.5% of the world population), 258 million people have mild vision impairment (3.3), 510 million people have near vision impairment (6.5%) and 43 million (0.5%) people are blind. The visual impairment in at least the 771 million people (90%) globally can be completely prevented or treated (1,2). Roughly, 89% of the visually impaired people live in developing countries particularly Sub-Saharan Africa (1-3).

Approximately 110 (9.9%) million people in Sub-Saharan African have some form of visual impairment and 5.4 million are estimated to be blind. This accounts for 15.3% of the world's blind population (1-3). In Eastern Sub-Saharan Africa region, 37 million people are living with visual impairment giving an estimated prevalence of 8.8%. This is the third highest burdened region following Southern Sub-Saharan and Western Sub-Saharan regions (1,2).

In Ethiopia, the eye problem is among the major public health challenges. It poses huge economic and social impacts on the affected individuals, the society, and the nation at large (4). An estimated 8.8 million people (7.8% of the total population) are living with some degree of visual impairment and 780,000 (0.7%) people are blind (1,2). The major causes of visual impairment are cataract, refractive errors, corneal opacity and macular degeneration (4). Similar to the rest of the world, 91% of the visual impairment in Ethiopia is due to avoidable causes either preventable or treatable (4).

The World Health Organization and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness launched the VISION 2020: The Right to Sight initiative and worked with member countries with the aim of eliminating preventable and treatable causes of visual impairment (5, 6). With such interventions, over the last two decades, though uneven geographically and far from eliminating preventable causes of visual impairments, there has been a reduction in the proportion of people with visual impairment and blindness worldwide (7). Similarly, despite the efforts by the Ethiopian Ministry of Health and partners to curve down the burden of preventable and treatable causes of visual impairment, it remained high (8).

Therefore, more effort needs to be made to reach those needy people living with visual impairment by devising strategy that can improve access to care and demand to care.

The current issue of the Ethiopian Journal of Health Sciences, the fifth regular issue for the year 2022, contains an editorial and sixteen original articles, a review article and a case report. Three of the original articles one way or in other deals about visual impairment conditions.

I invite readers to read through these articles and appreciate or utilize the contents. I also urge readers to forward comments and suggestions to the editor or the corresponding authors.

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