



World Health Organization

# ጤና ተቀናቃኝ TENACHIN

22 October 2009

## Ethiopia Implementing Global Initiative Vision 2020: FMOH

World Health Organization  
ETHIOPIA



Dr. Kebba O. Jaiteh, from WHO, and D. Tizita Hailu, from FMOH, [guest of honors left to right ] addressing the panelists on the occasion of world sight day .

Ethiopia observed the World Sight Day on Wednesday the 21<sup>st</sup> of October 2009 under a theme “Gender and Eye health-equal access to care” in a roundtable discussion at Desalegn Hotel here in Addis Ababa. Speaking at the occasion, Chairperson of the National Committee for Blindness Prevention (NCBP), Dr. Tizita Hailu on behalf of Dr. Kebede Worku, State Minister of the Ethiopian Federal Ministry of Health (FMOH), said WHO estimates that globally about 314 million people live with visual impairment due to either eye diseases or uncorrected refractive errors. Out of the total visual impairment, 45 million people are blind. Dr. Tizita, who is also Director of Pastoralist Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Directorate with the Ministry of Health, said nine out of ten blind people in the world live in developing countries such as Ethiopia, and nearly two-third of the total blind people in the world are women and girls. Studies have shown that the disability adjusted life years lost for women

exceeded 41.1 million compared to 29.5 million for men, for the studied six eye diseases including trachoma, cataract, age-related and glaucoma. A major factor for high burden of blindness in women is unequal access to eye care, she added.

On the occasion Dr. Kebba Jaiteh representing the WHO Country Office in Ethiopia told the participants that the suffering and anguish that blindness brings to people has been documented throughout history. “However” he stressed “curing blindness is a more recent idea, brought about by medical and surgical advances that have occurred primarily in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.”

The Global Initiative Vision 2020 was launched in 1999 jointly by the WHO and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness with an international membership of NGOs, professional associations, eye care institutions and corporations with a view to eliminating avoidable blindness by



World Health Organization

# ጤና ተቻጋጃ TENACHIN

## World Health Organization ETHIOPIA

the year 2020. Women and girls are among the major beneficiaries of the Global Initiative.

Speaking on his part Dr. Liknaw Adamu, Secretary of NCBP, said more than 70,000 people across Ethiopia have benefited from trachoma surgery over the past year. Encouraging activities have also been executed in the country to prevent trachoma, he said.

Dr. Tizita said Ethiopia is implementing the Global Initiative **Vision 2020: “The Right to Sight”** by designing a National Strategic Plan for Eye Care by establishing the NCBP. The country has also prepared a number of manuals for the effective implementation of the program. Finally Dr. Tizita expressed her gratitude to NCBP, ORBIS International and WHO for organizing and conducting the World Sight Day.

Dr. Kebba on his part pointed out that WHO is supporting the Ethiopian Federal Ministry



of Health by assigning/seconding a national professional officer for prevention of blindness and allocating some funds for the implementation of the National Five-Year Strategic Plan (2006 – 2010). Dr. Kebba reaffirmed WHO’s commitment by stating that “WHO, as a member of the Executive Committee of the National Committee for the Prevention of Blindness, is committed to continue assistance being given to the Federal Ministry of Health in the implementation of VISION 2020: the right to sight in Ethiopia,”

Every year World Sight Day is celebrated nationally and globally with different themes.

