

Summary of discussions by “Gender & VISION 2020: Issues & Strategies” group

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Discussions centered on the following issues. Highlights of the discussion and recommendations from the group are given below each of the broad issues:

1. Potential NGO roles in promoting gender as a focus of activities for VISION 2020 at the national, regional and international level
 - Monitoring of achievements of VISION 2020 is currently not gender disaggregated. Consequently, specific countries or WHO cannot monitor success by sex. The group felt that the VISION 2020 Monitoring Committee should re-examine the rationale for not disaggregating data by sex.
 - NGOs should take a pro-active role in ensuring that their programmes are gender-sensitive. It was felt that taking a gender-neutral approach would not lead to increased utilisation of services by women and girls.
 - Many NGOs have mission statements that focus on the most marginalized sectors of society yet promotion of gender sensitive approaches is quite limited.
 - Gender sensitive approaches that NGOs and partners develop must be culture specific; this requires a good understanding of the population being served.
 - While we generally talk about differences between women and men, it is recognized that there are significant differences in utilisation of eye care and rehabilitation services by boys and girls.
2. Linking gender to Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and seeking funds outside of prevention of blindness
 - Gender is recognized as one of the main components of successful programmes aimed at achieving the MDGs. If prevention of blindness is to be considered as one of the tools to achieve MDGs, we must be sure that we include gender considerations in our programmes.
 - There has been little interaction between those involved in gender and blindness and MDG related funding agencies. This needs further exploration. There are potential links through the UN.
3. Additional evidence needed to convince donors and agencies of the problem
 - While there is sufficient evidence of the problem, there is insufficient evidence of the how gender-sensitive programmes can reach women and girls. Documentation of these “best practices” is needed immediately.
 - Researchers should also generate evidence of the impact of restoring sight in women and men—to help stimulate recognition of the role of women in society.

4. What are the next steps and how can IAPB help lead the way

- Establish a Gender Working Group within IAPB. The terms and conditions of the working group should be developed.
- Existing partners (not present at the meeting) should be contacted and a plan of action for compiling data/reports/materials should be developed.