

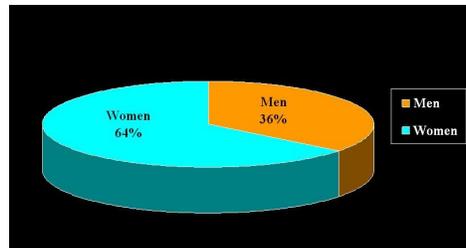
Seva Foundation

Gender and Blindness Initiative



A Greater Prevalence of Blindness: Globally, women comprise approximately **two-thirds** of the total cases of blindness (approximately 26 of 39 million needlessly blind in the world are female). The most common cause of blindness is cataract, which can be reversed by a **15-minute surgery and a day of rest**.

Burden of Blindness in the Population



Source: Abou-Gareeb et al. Gender and blindness: a meta-analysis of population-based prevalence surveys. *Ophthalmol Epidemiol*. 2001 Feb;8(1):39-56.

Though women live longer than men and have a slightly higher rate of cataract, the gender and blindness **inequity is 90% due to social causes**. For example, glaucoma, the second leading cause of global blindness, affects men and women equally, but women receive disproportionately less surgical and medical treatment than men. Gender inequity spans all age groups in developing countries; young girls have less access to medical and surgical services compared to boys.

Reducing Barriers: Women's barriers to accessing eye care services include cost, transportation, knowledge and perceived value of services, and fear of a poor surgical outcome. Seva addresses these barriers by:

- Offering free or low-cost eye care services
- Providing transportation assistance
- Supporting community outreach programs
- Publicizing services through radio, brochures, and videos
- Addressing fears through education
- Establishing eye care facilities closer to the communities where women and girls live

Seva and partners act as advocates around the world by spreading awareness of the unique barriers that females face. Seva is committed to creating and sustaining programs that provide equitable patient care with a **special focus on outreach to women and girls**.



The Problem:

- 39 million blind worldwide
- 48% blind from cataract
- 2 out of 3 blind are female

The Solution:

Increasing access to eye care for women and girls, conducting gender-specific eye health education, and providing sight-restoring surgeries will reduce gender inequities

Seva's Goal:

Increase gender equity in access to, and use of, eye care services for all ages and eye conditions.

Seva's Strategies:

- Promote sex-specific data gathering and analysis
- Develop gender-sensitive strategies as part of national and district VISION 2020 plans
- Educate national prevention of blindness committees about the importance of gender in eye care
- Establish a cadre of eye care personnel, especially female eye care providers and counselors, with skills in gender issues to help build capacity
- Foster commitment to equitable patient care, available to all regardless of race, gender, or ability to pay
- Create systems of high quality, sustainable community eye care
- Provide transportation and other logistical support for surgery

Contact:

Seva Foundation
1786 Fifth Street
Berkeley, CA 94710
510.845.7382
www.seva.org

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