CHILD EYE HEALTH STATEMENT 2025

Issued as the conclusion of the 1st Global Symposium on Child Eye Health: A Call to Action - February 2025

❖ Preamble

Four organizations—Berkeley Vision, India Vision Institute, OneSight EssilorLuxottica Foundation, and UNICEF—collaborated to host the first Global Symposium on ***Child Eye Health: A Call to Action***, held online from February 20-21, 2025, with support from CooperVision. The symposium was hosted under the banner of Berkeley Vision's One School at a Time program.

The symposium attracted over 1,700 registrants and brought together representatives from international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), universities, institutions, development agencies, civil society, eye care professionals, students, and industry leaders from across the globe. The inaugural session gathered global experts, thought leaders, and advocates from the hosting organizations, along with representatives from UNICEF, the World Council of Optometry (WCO), and the World Health Organization (WHO). They underscored the urgent need to address the pressing challenges of children's eye health worldwide. The symposium featured thought-provoking keynote lectures and panel discussions that fostered meaningful dialogue, collaborative engagement, and commitments to actionable strategies.

Recognizing that vision is a fundamental right and essential for a child's health, education, and overall development—and that every child deserves access to quality eye care services—the major outcome of the symposium resulted in this **Child Eye Health Statement 2025 (CEHS-2025)**, building on previous high-level deliberations and policy commitments:

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989)
- The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) (1990)
- The European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights (1996)
- The Durban Declaration on refractive error and service development (2007)
- The WHA Resolution 73.4 on Integrated People-Centered Eye Care (2020)
- The 74th WHA Resolution on Global Eye Care Targets 2030 (2021)
- UNGA Resolution 75/310, Vision for Everyone, accelerating action to achieve the SDGs (2021).

The Child Eye Health Statement 2025 is a key component of a broader process to develop comprehensive strategies, particularly in the context of the **WHO's SPECS 2030 initiative**, and is aimed at scaling up global efforts **to tackle uncorrected refractive error** in children. The Statement provides a foundation for policymakers and stakeholders to advance the child eye health agenda and shape a future of inclusive and sustainable societal development.

❖ We, as convening organizations, recognize that:

- Millions of children worldwide suffer unnecessarily from vision impairment, particularly in low- and middle-income countries
- Globally, at least 450 million children have a sight condition, primarily refractive errors, and 90 million live with a form of vision loss
- Uncorrected refractive error (myopia, hyperopia, and astigmatism) is the leading cause of visual impairment in children
- The prevalence of myopia in children is rapidly increasing worldwide, marking a significant escalation of related issues and posing an important health and economic burden on societies
- By 2050, without intervention, over 1.3 billion children are projected to be myopic
- Lack of access to vision care leads to academic difficulties, behavioral problems, and social isolation, affecting the child's potential and further development

- Preventive eye care measures, early detection and interventions, are critical to a child's well-being, academic success, and future opportunities
- Addressing uncorrected refractive error is a realistic and highly cost-effective way to unlock children's potential
- Adequate policies and legislations (ex. integration of primary eye care into primary health care (PHC) services for younger children), are essential to make child eye health a national priority, ensuring access to comprehensive eye care services at the community, primary, secondary, and tertiary levels, and improving resource availability and service sustainability
- Inclusive and equitable access to a simple pair of eyeglasses and assistive technologies for children with disabilities can transform their lives, enabling them to thrive in education and society, and turning lost opportunities into success and high performance.

❖ We further acknowledge that:

- WHO launched a global SPECS 2030 initiative to address uncorrected refractive error as a public health issue, including children
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**,** established right to health and education that encompass access to quality eye care services for all children, including those with disabilities (Articles 23, 24, 28)
- The European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child both emphasized that children's participation in education and society must include access to the means that ensure healthy vision
- The WHA and UNGA Resolutions created an enabling environment and commitments to accelerating action, achieving global eye care targets, and meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) by 2030

❖ We declare that:

- We fully support the WHO SPECS 2030 initiative and its five strategic pillars, which encompass advancing children's eye health through S-Services, P-personnel, E-education, C-cost, and S-surveillance
- We will work across sectors to achieve the global WHA target on effective refractive error coverage (eREC), +40% eREC increase by 2030, co-creating new approaches and innovative technology, and philanthropy models for pediatric eye health
- We will prioritize underserved communities, creating sustainable access to pediatric eye care services and provision of optical solutions, focusing on school eye health and programs such as One School at a Time (OSaaT)

❖ We further commit:

Under the WHO SPECS 2030 initiative and its five strategic pillars:

- To improve access to Refractive **Services** for children (Implementing policies for spectacles provision in the public sector, Integrating pediatric refractive services in PHC, and fostering innovation for screening and refraction in children)
- To build the capacity of **Personnel** (increasing the workforce capacity and training programs for pediatric refractive services, advancing universal access to eye care, and ensuring that no child is left behind in accessing the eye care they need to thrive)
- To improve population **Education** (raising awareness among parents, educators, health workers, and communities on the importance of child eye health, implementing public health campaigns, promoting myopia prevention in schools, increasing demand for spectacles and compliance)
- To reduce the **Cost** of refractive services in children (including pediatric refractive services in UHC, addressing trade barriers, fostering philanthropy and sustainable financing mechanisms)
- To strengthen research and **Surveillance** for pediatric refractive services (collecting and reporting data on children's eye health and integrating eREC indicators in the Health Information System (HIS), implementing robust monitoring mechanisms to track child eye health outcomes)

❖ We call upon:

Governments, policymakers, international organizations, NGOs, civil society, the eye care industry, and funding partners to:

1. Prioritize child eye health and pediatric refractive services within health, education, and development agendas
2. Develop adequate policies and implement child eye health programs in schools
3. Develop resources and enhance personnel capacity to address challenges in access to child eye health
4. Promote child eye health as a fundamental right and raise awareness among stakeholders
5. Foster multi-sectoral collaborations to scale up services and solutions for child eye health

❖ We reaffirm our commitment to:

1. Prioritizing Child Eye Health as a Human Right and Public Health Imperative
- Advocating for child eye health as a fundamental right, ensuring inclusion of children with disabilities
- Providing evidence-based insights to demonstrate that eye health is essential to a child's well-being, health, and societal development
-Ensuring child eye health is a national priority

2. Promoting Universal Access to Children's Eye Care
-Strengthening child eye health services through national health systems and universal health coverage frameworks
-Ensuring routine vision screenings and early interventions
-Expanding integrated people-centered eye care, including school-based vision screening and referral mechanisms

3. Advancing the WHO SPECS 2030 Initiative
-Implementing the five strategic pillars: S-Services, P-Personnel, E-Education, C-Cost, S-Surveillance
-Supporting the 40% increase in eREC by 2030

4. Mobilizing Multi-Sectoral Partnerships (health, education, finance) and Sustainable Financing
-Encouraging governments, private sector stakeholders, and philanthropic organizations to invest in child eye health initiatives
-Encouraging investment in school-based eye health programs, recognizing that good vision is a prerequisite for quality education
-Strengthening public-private partnerships to establish funding mechanisms and ensure the sustainability of school programs, particularly in low- and middle-income countries

5. Advancing Advocacy, Policies and Legislations
-Encouraging policymakers to integrate child eye health into national, health, education and development agendas
-Informing policymakers with evidence about the economic burden of childhood myopia, refractive error, and other vision impairments
-Promoting policy best practices that allocate resources in pediatric eye health services
-Advocating for universal school vision screenings and the provision of free or affordable glasses

6. Encouraging Public Health Research
-Promoting research, collection, collation, analysis, and dissemination of evidence-based data relating to children's vision
-Encouraging research collaboration between NGOs, academic institutions, and industry leaders to scale up impact
-Developing data-driven frameworks to monitor child eye health outcomes and assess the effectiveness of interventions

7. Advancing Public Awareness and Behavioral Change
-Launching national and community-level awareness campaigns to emphasize the importance of vision care
-Empower parents, teachers, and caregivers with knowledge and tools about myopia and preventive measures
-Address stigma and misconceptions among children related to wearing spectacles and receiving eye care services

8. Building Capacity and Leveraging Innovation
-Expanding training programs for eye care professionals, educators, and community health workers to ensure a well-equipped workforce capable of addressing childhood vision needs
-Leveraging technology and digital innovation, such as tele-refraction or AI-supported tools, to improve screening and eye exam services and outreach

9. Fostering International Cooperation
-Engaging with global organizations, such as WHO and UNICEF**,** to coordinate, cooperate, and co-create solutions that play a crucial role in funding, training, and providing resources for child eye health programs

Time for Action, Investment, and Systemic Change!

- ✓ *As global leaders in eye health, education, and child welfare, we pledge to work collaboratively to ensure that every child, regardless of location or background, has access to quality eye care and can see, learn, and thrive.*
- ✓ *By uniting efforts and resources, we can eliminate avoidable childhood vision impairment and create a future where every child can learn, grow, and thrive with clear vision.*
- ✓ *We call upon governments, policymakers, health and education leaders, the private sector, other NGOs, and communities worldwide to join us in transforming the commitments of this Child Eye Health Statement into concrete actions. Together, we can empower children with the vision they need to achieve their full potential.*

Organizations
1. **Berkeley Vision**
2. **India Vision Institute**
3. **OneSight EssilorLuxottica Foundation**
4. **UNICEF**