

The Value of Vision

The case for investing in eye health – Explainer



A report by



Available on the



Explainer: The Investment Case

Investment case put simply

The problem

Almost 1 billion people in low- and middle-income countries live with sight loss that could have been avoided with timely access to an eye exam, a pair of glasses or cataract surgery. Left unaddressed the problem compounds year on year.

For most people, sight could still be restored with access to services. Correcting vision with glasses and restoring sight through cataract surgery are among the most cost-effective health interventions.

The potential

If we could reach 1 billion people with sight loss in low- and middle-income countries, the global economy would benefit by \$447 billion annually. This benefit comes from: more people working, increased productivity in the workplace, increased learning and future potential earning of school children, increased productivity and workforce participation from carers who can return to work.

A catalytic step change

Despite having the know-how for providing eye exams, glasses and cataract surgery, reaching 1 billion people by business as usual is not achievable. The Investment Case outlines a path to action – a step change for eye health and a strong foundation to build on.

This first step is to reach 255 million people in low- and middle-income countries between 2026-2030. By investing \$7.1 billion over 5 years in the 6 recommended accelerator actions in low- and middle-income countries.

This will bring transformational gains to people, societies, and economies, particularly in low- and middle-income countries where it is needed most – achieving something that has never been achieved before.

By 2030 we can deliver an economic gain of \$199 billion to the world's economy.

One of the best buys in health and development

For every \$1 spent, \$28 are returned.

\$1 : \$28

every \$1 invested in eye health can yield a \$28 return in low- and middle-income countries

Foundation for acceleration

This first step is the foundation for reaching a further 750 million people in low- and middle-income countries and the realisation of an annual return of \$447 billion to the world's economy.

With increased, accelerated and sustained investment we can invest in additional strategic interventions, further strengthening systems and transforming lives for 1 billion people.

Key differences between benefit figures

	\$199 billion in economic benefits 2026–2030	\$447 billion in economic benefits annually
Time frame	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 years • 2026–2030 • Once off 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On completion of addressing all sight loss in low- and middle-income countries • Annual
Reach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 255 million people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 billion people
Countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low- and middle-income countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low- and middle-income countries
Eye conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncorrected refractive error • Cataract 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All eye conditions
Investment required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$7.1 billion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unknown
Return on investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$1 : \$28 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unknown
Interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community level screening and referral (for all conditions) • Ready-made reading glasses • Refraction and distance glasses • Cataract surgical productivity • Some strategies to address barriers • Cataract surgical quality measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex strategies
Why did we include both?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a practical first step, this would still achieve something never before accomplished • Achievable in a government term • To create momentum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To align with the 1 billion need in the 2030 In Sight strategy and framing • To create media attention • To be aspirational for countries of investors who want to achieve more

Broader explanation

The big picture

2030 In Sight is a strategy to end avoidable sight loss. Today, nearly 1 billion people live with sight loss, with 90% living in low- and middle-income countries. If we could eliminate all sight loss in these countries, the world economy would grow by \$447 billion every year.

Available evidence informed the methodology

Our analysis focused on low- and middle-income countries, where evidence shows strong benefits from treating the two most common and easily preventable causes of sight loss.

- In high-income countries, the evidence is limited or absent.
- Interventions for other eye diseases are more complex and varied, so they were not included in the analysis.
- **Accelerator interventions** Using the available evidence, the technical experts were able to identify the 6 key interventions that can make large and immediate changes to improve eye health. The interventions served as the base for the costing exercise.
- **Cost to provide eye care** Costing data was collected from service providers in low- and middle-income countries to provide the evidence and real numbers for providing the cost of the interventions. This is the largest costing exercise done to date. All data collected in 2025.
- **Benefits of addressing sight loss** The benefits data was drawn from available evidence to demonstrate the broad social and economic benefit of eye care.

Determining the potential number reached by the model

- Data on the 6 key interventions was modelled to determine how many people would access the interventions and derive the intended benefit. All assumptions were reviewed and approved by a diverse technical committee of experts.
- Result: 255 million people in low- and middle-income countries would benefit from investment in the 6 key interventions in low- and middle-income countries, generating \$199 billion economic benefit.

Reaching the 1 billion

- Benefits were then extrapolated for reaching the 1 billion in low- and middle-income countries to demonstrate the potential that could be aspired to over and beyond the Investment Case report.
- Result: \$447 billion economic benefit annually

FAQs

Why 1 billion people?

1 billion = 90% of 1.1 billion with sight loss who live in low- and middle-income countries.

What is the difference between the \$447 billion and \$199 billion economic gains?

By reaching all 1 billion people in low- and middle-income countries with sight loss we could deliver \$447 billion in economic benefits annually. Our five-year plan is to start with reaching an achievable 255 million, delivering \$199 billion dollars in economic benefits.

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Find out more

The Value of Vision: The case for investing in eye health is available online.

We also provide detailed data and visualizations at both the global and country levels, which can be explored on the IAPB Vision Atlas:

<https://visionatlas.iapb.org/> offering comprehensive insights to support evidence-based investment in eye health.



Photo credit

Assam tea pickers; by Sarah Day Photography

The Value of Vision: The case for investing in eye health

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