

Advancing Road Safety Through Clear Vision: VARS 4.0 Sets Bold Agenda

New Delhi, March 12, 2025—The 4th Annual Vision and Road Safety (VARS 4.0) Conference, co-hosted by India Vision Institute, Mission for Vision, Sightsavers India, and VisionSpring, successfully concluded today at the India Habitat Centre, New Delhi. The conference brought together experts, policymakers, and stakeholders from the road safety and eye health sectors to deliberate on the critical role of clear vision in ensuring safer roads.

The VARS 4.0 conference builds upon last year's third Vision and Road Safety (VARS) convening. Over the past year, the co-hosts have collectively screened the vision of nearly **2 million** commercial vehicle drivers, helpers, cleaners, mechanics, and other transport workers in India. They remain committed to sustaining this momentum in the future. With the provision of eyeglasses and essential eye care, they have significantly enhanced the safety standards on the roads. Committed to sustaining and expanding this progress, the initiative strives to provide every transport worker with essential eye care, ensuring both their safety and the safety of others on the road.

More than 100 eye health leaders convened at this event, with addresses from experts and policymakers from the UN Envoy for Road Safety (UNRSF), the World Health Organization (WHO) India, and the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, to align on the practical next steps and deliver accessible eye care to drivers and transport workers across India to improve road safety.

This initiative aligns with the UN Global Plan for Road Safety, which underscores the importance of improved vision in achieving safer road standards, as well as WHO's VISION 2030 agenda, which promotes a people-centered approach to eye care. Stockholm Declaration on Road Safety, India is committed to reduce road traffic deaths and injuries to 50% by 2030.

Impaired vision is detrimental for drivers across India. As per the report, Road Accidents in India 2022 released by MORTH, total accidents in India amounted to 4,61,312 out of which 1,68,491 resulted in deaths. Additionally as per the Central Road Research Institute study conducted involving 500 commercial vehicle drivers in Delhi, 37% of the drivers experienced far vision limitation in the left eye, 36% in the right eye and 31% in both eyes. Similarly, a high percentage of drivers suffered from near-vision limitations.

An aspect overlooked in road safety measures is the significance of clear and healthy vision required for safe driving, enabling drivers to effectively perceive road conditions, signs, and potential hazards. Targeted Eye Health initiatives for driving communities are critical to the Goal of "Vision Zero" in Road Safety.

Additionally, vision plays a crucial role in advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, intersecting with multiple Sustainable Development Goals—from poverty alleviation and economic growth to employment, education, gender equality, and reducing inequalities.

In addition to the vision screening commitment, the delegates attending VARS 4.0 agreed on the following to improve road safety standards:

- **Advocating for Eye Health:** Integrate and recognise the importance of eye health as a core component of road safety policies and enhance district-level road safety plans.
- **Strengthening Vision Screening Initiatives:** Engage with policy space to promote vision checks for commercial drivers at the time of license issuance and renewal. Also, promote the advancement of periodic vision screening.

- **Setting National Standards:** Acknowledge the importance of building sustainable partnerships and the need for stronger multi-sector collaborations to scale up vision screenings, provide affordable eyewear to drivers and road users, and integrate eye care into national road safety strategies.
- **Inclusion of Eye Health as the 5th 'E' in Road Safety:** Why eye health should be recognised as a core component of road safety. The impact of vision impairment on driver performance and reaction time. The prevalence of undiagnosed vision problems among commercial drivers and the urgent need for widespread screening. Strategies for public awareness campaigns to establish the link between vision and road safety. The role of mobile vision screening vans and RTO-based vision centers in reaching at-risk drivers.

Honourable Chief Guest, Mr Amod K. Kanth, Founder - Prayas JAC Society, Jt. Coordinator NITI-CSOs Standing Committee of NITI Aayog, Former Chairman, DWSSC and DCPCR, and Former DGP (IPS) said, **"With 34 years in the police force, I have seen the devastating impact of road accidents—1.5 lakh lives lost annually, which does not account for people who become disabled. Recognizing eye health as the fifth 'E' of road safety is a crucial step toward prevention. On behalf of Prayas JAC Society, I pledge our support to this vital partnership for safer roads and clearer vision."**

In a joint statement, Mr Anshu Taneja, Managing Director, VisionSpring, India, Ms Elizabeth Kurian, CEO, Mission for Vision, Mr R. N. Mohanty, CEO, Sightsavers India, and Mr Vinod Daniel, CEO, India Vision Institute said: **"Recognising the undeniable link between vision and road safety, Sightsavers India, India Vision Institute, Mission for Vision, and VisionSpring urge government agencies, corporates, and NGOs to join hands in making roads safer across India by creating awareness of the cause and investing in the same. Sharp vision is not just a health priority but a road safety imperative. We call for systemic changes, including mandatory vision screening for all commercial drivers, integration of eye health into road safety policies, and strengthened multi-sector partnerships to ensure safer roads for all."**

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About India Vision Institute

India Vision Institute (IVI) is an independent, not-for-profit registered trust (with section 12A, 80G and FCRA of IT Act clearances). Established in 2012, our activities and programs across India's far corners have helped over one million Indians access free vision screenings and a pair of corrective glasses. IVI has been working to augment the primary eye capacity of India through vision screening of underprivileged communities, adults, children and commercial vehicle drivers, building human resource capacity and support Indian Optometry. For prevention of avoidable blindness, our optometrists work to provide timely intervention in disadvantaged communities and remote areas, through our programs Eye See & I Learn for children and Eye See & I Work for adults. These are helping children do well in school and better their future prospects, and adults improve their

work productivity, leading to economic growth and prosperity. To advance Indian Optometry, we work in awareness generation, capacity building, leadership development and promoting the research culture.

About Mission for Vision

Mission for Vision (MFV) is a not-for-profit organisation established in the year 2000 to eradicate avoidable blindness through the enablement of high-quality, comprehensive and equitable eye care. It was founded on the basis that poverty is a cause and effect of visual and other disabilities that in turn increase the social divide. Eradicating avoidable blindness will enhance productivity, significantly impact GDP and promote social and economic equity among nations. Today, MFV works in 24 Indian states and union territories with leading eye health partners. MFV and its partners have enabled interventions to 21.20+ million people and 3.30+ million eye surgeries, at no cost to the patient. MFV has also contributed towards the establishment of 24 leading charitable eye centres in India. MFV has also enabled the establishment of 163 Vision Centres (VCs). During FY 2023-24, MFV along with its partners enabled eye services for 1,608,797 people and 284,743 eye surgeries at no cost to the patient.

Mission for Vision's work is intended to assist and complement the Government of India's efforts for the reduction of blindness towards Universal Health Coverage. It also aligns with similar global agendas, set by the World Health Organisation and other bodies and directly impacts 11 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Vision: To restore the gift of vision to every visually impaired human being, irrespective of nationality, religion or socio-economic status.

www.missionforvision.org.in

About Sightsavers India

Sightsavers India is a development organisation that has been working in India since 1966 to eliminate avoidable blindness and promote equality of opportunity for people with disability. Our work has enabled thousands of people to lead lives of independence and dignity.

Sightsavers India focuses on collaborating with various departments of the state governments to scale up operations for eye health, inclusive education and social inclusion – our three core areas of work.

One of India's most extensive eye health programmes, RAAHI, focuses on ensuring road safety by providing eye care services to the truckers' community. We have crossed the milestone of eye screenings of one million (10 lakh) truck drivers. The programme is spread across 22 exclusive camp locations, 26 static centres, 2 mobile vision centres along the Golden Quadrilateral and North-South-East-West (NSEW) Network. The Programme is designed so that eye care services reach overworked truck drivers and commercial drivers at their convenience. We have permanent vision centres and pop-up outreach camps in locations where drivers stop as part of their usual route to rest or unload cargo. The use of a fully equipped mobile ophthalmology van under the programme makes eye health more accessible for the commercial driving community.

www.sightsaversindia.org

About VisionSpring

VisionSpring is a pioneering social mission creating access to eyeglasses for low-income adults and children. Annually in India, VisionSpring reaches more than 27 lakh (2.7 million) people with eye-screenings and corrects the vision of more than 12 lakh (1.2 million) people with eyeglasses. On average, 73% of VisionSpring's participants acquire their first-ever pair of eyeglasses through the *See to Earn*, *See to Learn*, and *See to be Safe*

programs. To date, VisionSpring has distributed approx. 8 million (80 lakh) pairs of corrective eyeglasses in India, creating more than \$2.6 billion (approx. Rs. 22,500 crore) in economic impact for low-income households.

The organization delivers on its eye health mission across 28 states, working with more than 1,000 hospitals/healthcare facilities and NGOs, 15 state governments and agencies, and 65 corporates/CSRs.

VisionSpring's work has been covered in [The New York Times](#) | [The Economist](#) | [Forbes](#) | [The Lancet](#) | [The Economic Times](#).