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[Vision 2047: Access to quality eyecare is an important pivot](#)

Earlier this year, on the 77th Independence Day, Prime Minister Modi urged the country's 1.4 billion citizens to work towards a developed India by 2047, turning the dream into a resolute mission. As India aims for Vision 2047, the goal must be a high standard of living, strong infrastructure, advanced industries, quality education, and robust healthcare – including vision care for all, especially in remote areas, where approximately 70% of the population lives.

The Line of Sight

About 550 million (55 Crore) people in India require intervention to achieve their best-corrected vision, according to a 2019 report published by EssilorLuxottica in consultation with global health experts. In 2020, the WHO estimated 270 million (27 Crore) of those with uncorrected poor vision have moderate to severe levels of vision loss, of which 9.2 million (92 Lakh) were blind. In fact, India leads the world with the largest population with uncorrected poor vision.

If we are to address the issue of poor vision in rural areas – including the 112 Aspirational Districts – we need a dedicated push to overcome the challenges. Limited access to medical facilities requires attention. Approximately 75% of India's healthcare resources are urban-based, leaving rural areas underserved. Many seeking care have to travel more than 100 km to reach the nearest healthcare facilities.

Also challenging is the significant shortage of skilled healthcare professionals. According to the Optometry Council of India, the country has approximately 42,000 primary eyecare practitioners (optometrists, ophthalmic assistants and refractionists), in addition to ophthalmologists who provide medical and surgical therapy.

We must also address the issue of lack of awareness of vision problems and solutions. In many cases, early detection ensures the issue can be treated effectively so the population can live to their highest potential.

Creating the Ecosystem

Digital India is setting the foundation for investments in technology to address these challenges. For example, tele-refraction, a test to determine the need for vision correction and prescription strength, uses technology to bridge the distance gaps for remote communities, as urban eye care professionals can extend care. A study conducted at Dr. Shroff's Charity Eye Hospital in New Delhi found no difference in best-corrected vision between real-time tele-refraction with remote optometrists and face-to face examinations. In fact, 85% of measurements conformed to the gold standard of face-to face refraction.

An additional study in Gujarat, published in Indian Journal of Ophthalmology, reported that of the 1000 patients enrolled, the 29% diagnosed with uncorrected poor vision via tele-refraction were able to get glasses at a local vision center, saving them a visit to the hospital 53km away. Both studies demonstrate that tele-refraction is a reliable tool in remote regions – eliminating barriers to care.

Beyond service delivery, partnerships are key to addressing poor vision at scale. Through our collective work, we are encouraged by government efforts to co-create solutions at all levels. This is evident in the work to ensure availability of Comprehensive Primary Health Care (CPHC) through a network of 150,000+ Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs). As an example, in close collaboration with the Government of Odisha, OneSight EssilorLuxottica Foundation placed its trained primary vision care providers into the HWC network to deliver eye care to over 100,000 people through tele-refraction, resulting in 25,000 receiving free eyeglasses and 15,000 referrals to higher care centers. Similar collaborations prove that a strong national plan executed locally can scale vision care.

Given that tele-refraction is a proven approach to vision care, we can potentially collaborate with the 42,000 eye care practitioners in India to connect them to remote technicians – who we can jointly train with Skill India – at more than 150,000 HWCs across the country, offering a sustainable and permanent solution to this issue.

The future of good vision for India lies in the hands of the people. A fully developed country must be one where all can see well to live up to their potential. It will require devotion and resilience – something that our people consistently embody. Just like the Chandrayaan-3 spacecraft moon landing showcased determination, a similar resolve can ensure good vision for all. In Prime Minister Modi's words, that is how we "turn a dream into a resolute mission."