Country level one pager policy brief:

**Diabetic Retinopathy: A call for action in xxx (country name)**

**Introduction:**

Diabetic Retinopathy (DR) is the most common complication of diabetes, affecting 1 in 5 people with diabetes[[1]](#endnote-2). DR often leads to vision impairment and blindness unless treated timely[[2]](#endnote-3). The impact of vision impairment goes beyond individual; community and economies lose earning capacity and productivity through the loss of human capital, experience and expertise[[3]](#endnote-4). Vision loss due to DR is one of the most feared complications for people with diabetes[[4]](#endnote-5).

DR is the fifth leading cause of vision impairment and blindness globally. This is also associated with increased death and poor mental health. In xxx (country), the number of people affected by DR are xxxxx (Number) and is the xxx (nth) cause of blindness and vision impairment. 95% of vision loss due to DR can be prevented with early screening, detection and timely treatment[[5]](#endnote-6).

**Policy landscape:**

* The United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/1 (2015), adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and defined the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the associated target 3.4 of reducing the risk of premature mortality from diabetes and other major noncommunicable diseases by one third by 20306[[6]](#endnote-7).
* In May 2022, the World Health Assembly endorsed the Global Diabetes Compact, encompassing [five global diabetes coverage and treatment targets](https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA75-REC1/A75_REC1_Interactive_en.pdf) to be achieved by 2030[[7]](#endnote-8).
* The high-level meeting on Universal Health Coverage (2023) recognizes that UHC cannot be achieved without advancing eye health[[8]](#endnote-9).
* The [WHA 2020 on Integrated People-centred Eye Care](https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA74/A74(12)-en.pdf) urged all member states to make eye care an integral part of UHC and to integrate people centred eye care into their national health systems.
* Two new ambitious [eye health targets](https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA74/A74(12)-en.pdf) for 2030 were adopted at the WHA 2021. These targets address the two leading causes of blindness and vision impairment, cataract and refractive error. They are a vital mechanism to monitor global progress on eye health and to hold governments accountable. At this meeting several members expressed the need to consider adopting a target for DR and work is ongoing to collate data for an indicator on retina screening coverage for people with diabetes.
* Xxx (country name) committed to all these global resolutions and commitments.

**Key stakeholders:**

Engaging with key stakeholders of DR is critical for the comprehensive prevention and treatment. The key stakeholders include:

* Ministries or departments of health responsible for public health policies, programs, and healthcare delivery;
* Healthcare Providers: Ophthalmologists, optometrists, primary care physicians, endocrinologists, and other healthcare professionals involved in the screening, diagnosis, and management of DR;
* Diabetes Associations: National and local organizations dedicated to diabetes education, advocacy, and support services;
* Eye Care Organizations: NGOs, charities, and professional associations focused on promoting eye health, preventing blindness, and providing eye care services;
* Patients and Patient Advocacy Groups: Individuals living with diabetes and DR,
* Pharmaceutical Companies;
* Academic & research institutions,
* Health Insurance Providers;
* Community Leaders and Influencers
* International Health Organizations like WHO, IDF & IAPB

**Policy Recommendations:**

* Promote intersectoral collaboration to integrate DR care into all diabetes policies and national health strategic plans so that people with diabetes receive a continuum of interventions encompassing promotion, prevention and treatment of DR.
* Strengthen and improve access to diabetes care at all levels, to adapt and respond to the rapidly changing population needs, including the projected growth in the number of people with DR.
* Develop and implement screening and treatment interventions for DR that are contextually appropriate to the needs of different populations and to the resources available in different countries’ health care systems.
* Provide UHC for interventions that reduce the risk of vision impairment in people with diabetes, including screening, the treatments and the drugs required to achieve this.
* Advocate for people-centred diabetes and eye care, engaging people with diabetes to participate in the development of policies that address their DR needs.
* Strengthen national capacity to collect, analyse and use services data on the burden and trends of diabetes, DR and DR-related vision impairment, to monitor and evaluate progress.

**Conclusion:**

Xxx (country) needs a multisectoral approach to tackle the burden of DR. This should incorporate all aspects of care including promotion, prevention, screening and treatment, and rehabilitation at all levels of care. The DR services should be incorporated into diabetes management and integrated into the national health system.

**References**

1. International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) and International Diabetes Federation (IDF), *Diabetic Retinopathy: A Global Policy Brief*, IAPB & IDF, 2021 [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
2. World Health Organization, *World Report on Vision*, WHO, 2019, <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/world-report-on-vision> (accessed April 2025). [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
3. IAPB, *Vision Atlas: The Economic Impact of Vision Loss*, IAPB, 2023 [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
4. International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) and International Diabetes Federation (IDF), *Diabetic Retinopathy: A Global Policy Brief*, IAPB & IDF, 2021 [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
5. World Health Organization, *World Report on Vision*, WHO, 2019, <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/world-report-on-vision> (accessed April 2025). [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
6. United Nations General Assembly, *Resolution 70/1: Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, UN, 2015, [Transforming our world : the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development :](https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3923923?v=pdf) (accessed April 2025). [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
7. World Health Organization, *The Global Diabetes Compact*, WHO, 2021, <https://www.who.int/initiatives/the-global-diabetes-compact> (accessed April 2025). [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
8. United Nations, *Political Declaration of the High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage*, UN, 2023, <https://www.un.org/pga/77/2023/09/21/political-declaration-on-uhc-2023> (accessed 9 April 2025). [↑](#endnote-ref-9)