

# Policy and advocacy achievements of 2023

## Pakistan

June 2024

# Introduction

This report is a summary of the key successes in policy and advocacy achieved in Pakistan in 2023, led by the country office, with support from the Policy and Global Advocacy team, Global Technical Leads and other teams. The report aims to provide an overview of the most significant achievements, although it is not exhaustive and there are many other examples of progress made towards Sightsavers' policy and advocacy goals which have not been included in the interests of keeping the summary at a manageable length. Sightsavers recognises that policy change requires long-term investment from multiple actors including government, civil society and international NGO partners, and it is important to note that these achievements are not solely attributed to the input of Sightsavers. For a comprehensive overview of Sightsavers' work on policy and advocacy in 2021, 2022 and 2023 please refer to the [Advocacy Outcomes Dashboard](#).

## Social inclusion

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### Ratification of the Marrakech Treaty

In December 2023, the government of Pakistan ratified the Marrakech Treaty, to facilitate access to published works for persons who are blind and visually impaired. The treaty provides a copyright exception, allowing the sharing of works to people with disabilities without the copyrights holder's permission. This is a landmark achievement, with Pakistan joining over 120 member states which have now ratified the treaty. It was Sightsavers who initiated the discussion for ratification of the Marrakech Treaty with key stakeholders, including the Intellectual Property Organisation (IPO), publishers' association, ministry of human rights, ministry of planning, development and special initiatives and OPDs, facilitating the partnerships and coordination which delivered this milestone.

### Introduction of the Washington Group Questions into the census

In the 2023 census, the Washington Group Questions on disability were used for the first time. While the findings are not yet available, this marks an important milestone in generating national level data on disability, which can be used for government planning purposes and reporting on progress towards the SDGs. Sightsavers played an important role through its advocacy work over many years, in engaging with government stakeholders on the need for disability data, and advocating for the integration of the Washington Group Questions into the census.

### Integration of the Washington Group Questions into the Labour Force Survey

After advocacy efforts led by Sightsavers and partners, the Washington Group questions on disability were integrated into the Labour Force Survey in 2023. This is an important step forward, providing disability disaggregated data in the national statistics on employment. Sightsavers will continue to engage with government and civil society stakeholders to ensure

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that the disability data generated through labour force surveys is used for the purposes of determining the needs for economic empowerment and support for people with disabilities in accessing jobs.

## Inclusive education

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### Integration of a module on inclusive education into the teacher training curriculum

In 2023, Sightsavers' technical experts developed a foundation course for the Federal College of Education on inclusive education, for a four-year bachelor's degree teacher training programme. The major objective of the course is to introduce trainee teachers to the concepts of inclusive education for children with disabilities. The course will enable them to understand the diversity of learners in the classroom and equip them to adopt teaching approaches that are appropriate for children with disabilities. The course will introduce them to assessment methods that are inclusive for children with disabilities. Sightsavers initiated discussions with the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan to discuss the scale-up of this course in all universities offering degree courses in education.

### Introduction of an inclusive education assessment tool for children with disabilities

Until now, there has been no comparable data available on learning outcomes for children with and without disabilities in Pakistan, as assessment methods are not accessible for children with disabilities. To address this issue, Sightsavers adapted the International Common Assessment of Numeracy (ICAN) tool for children with visual and hearing impairments. ICAN was developed by the Peoples Action for Learning (PAL) Network working in seventeen countries across the global south. With these adaptations made and tested in Pakistan, ICAN will be used in all PAL network countries in various iterations. The Idara e Taheen o Agahi (ITA), the lead agency in the assessment of education in Pakistan, has committed to using the inclusive version of the ICAN for the Annual Status of Education Report. This is a significant development which will enable children with disabilities to fully participate in assessments, and provide government and civil society stakeholders with data on the learning outcomes of children with disabilities, which can be used to address their needs. Sightsavers initiated a dialogue with the Ministry of Education to advocate for the replication of the adaptations in assessment tools to be used in public sector schools.

## Inclusive eye health

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### Incorporation of eye health indicators into the HMIS

Following long-term engagement from Sightsavers and other partners, five districts in the provinces of Sindh and Punjab have included an indicator on eye health into the District Health Information System (DHIS2). Sightsavers initiated a discussion with the district health authority of Khanewal to introduce an eye health indicator into the DHIS2, as the eye care

services have been established and functional at all rural health centres of Khanewal district under Sightsavers' Inclusive Eye Health project. After rigorous follow-up meetings with the officials of the district health authority, eye health indicators have been added to the system. Now data is being captured at the rural health facility level and compiled at district level along with visibility at provincial level.

## **Integration of opticianry into provincial health services**

In collaboration with the National Committee for Eye Health and the College of Ophthalmology and Allied Vision Sciences (COAVS), Sightsavers developed a two-year opticianry course in 2023. The course was approved by the relevant regulatory body, in this case the Punjab Medical Faculty. Until now, there was no formal academic programme in opticianry, and this course is the first-ever diploma programme in Pakistan, which will produce a skilled workforce of opticians. The Punjab Health Foundation has offered a grant of 5 million Pakistani Rupees to institutions offering the course. In addition, rural health facilities in Sindh province have created new posts for optometrists. With all of these developments, Sightsavers has contributed to the sustainable delivery of eye care.

## **Inclusion of eye health medicines into the essential drug list**

Following on-going advocacy from Sightsavers and partner organisations, rural health centres in the province of Sindh integrated eye health medicines into the essential drug list. This is an important development towards the long term advocacy objective of provincial healthcare departments bringing primary eye care within their domain.