

# EYE HEALTH

and advancing the...



## The Latest Evidence

Eye health services that aim to maximise vision, ocular health and functional ability are powerful enablers for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in 2015. A series of reviews for the *Lancet Global Health* Commission on Global Eye Health found evidence that eye health services have wide-ranging benefits that span across multiple SDGs: in particular, reducing poverty (SDG 1), improving economic productivity (SDG 8), health and well-being (SDG3), educational achievement (SDG 4), equality (SDGs 5 and 10), and road safety (SDG 11).

**1** NO POVERTY



### Improved eye health reduces poverty (SDG 1) and improves productivity (SDG 8)

Several studies have shown increases in productivity, household expenditure and household income following access to eye health interventions. In the Philippines, household per capita expenditure increased by 88% over one year in people who underwent cataract surgery.<sup>1</sup>

**3** GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



### Improved eye health advances general health and well-being (SDG 3)

Cataract surgery is associated with an improvement in symptoms in people with depression and a slowing of cognitive decline in people with dementia.<sup>2</sup> Reducing vision impairment improves quality of life.<sup>3</sup>

**4** QUALITY EDUCATION



### Improved eye health advances educational outcomes (SDG 4)

The provision of spectacles can improve academic test scores, with one study in China showing that the provision of spectacles reduced the odds of failing a class by 44%.<sup>4</sup>

**5** GENDER EQUALITY



### Improved eye health advances equality (SDGs 5 & 10)

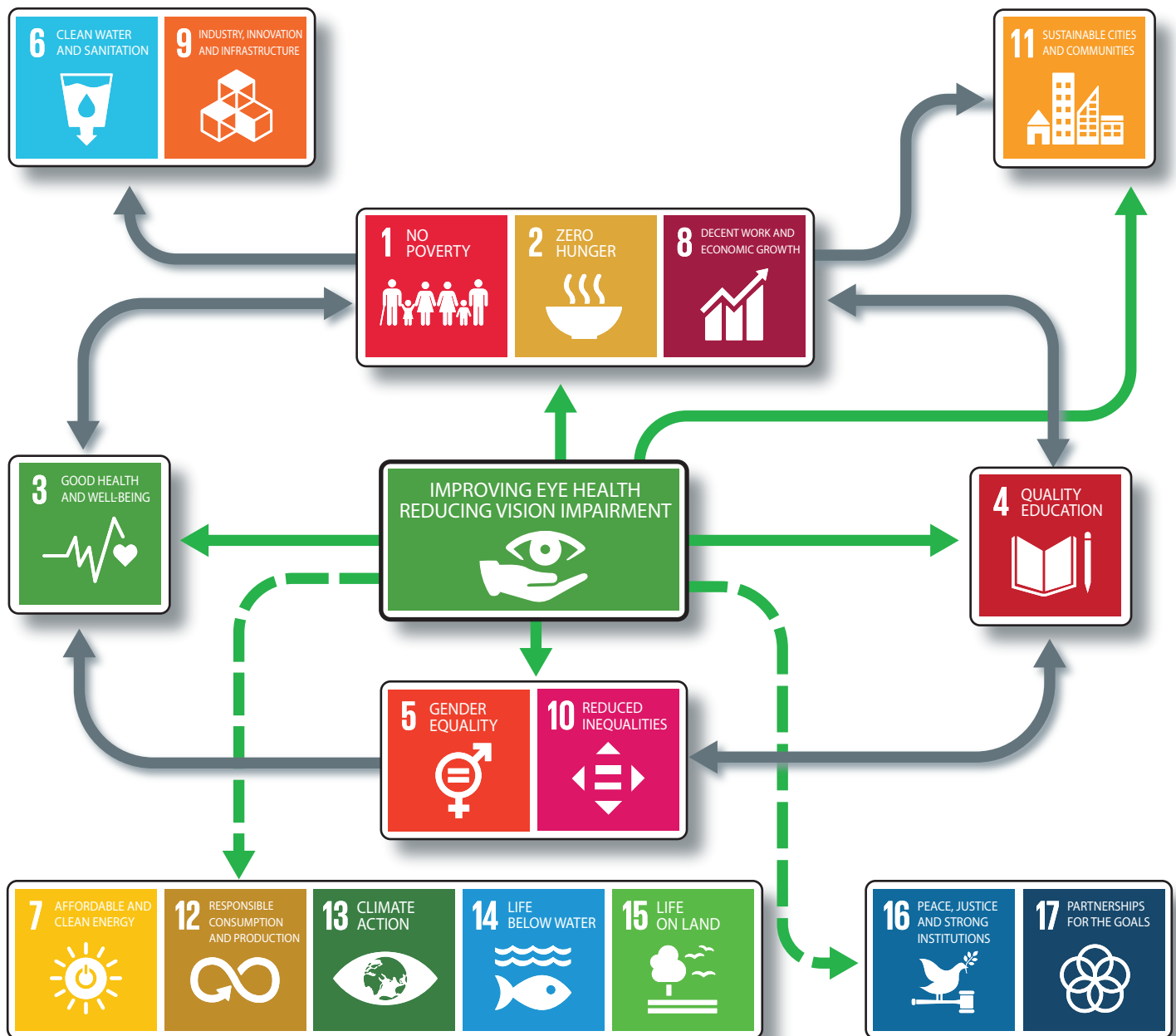
Interventions such as training rural community eye health volunteers and provision of cataract surgery can reduce gender inequality in relation to attendance and treatment.<sup>5,6</sup> Similarly, income inequality has been shown to be reduced through cataract surgery.<sup>1</sup>

**11** SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



### Improved eye health reduces road traffic accidents (SDG 11)

Cataract surgery can reduce driving-related difficulties and motor vehicle crashes.<sup>7</sup> Treatment for macular degeneration has been shown to delay driving cessation which is associated with social isolation and depression.<sup>8</sup>



Improving eye health: solid green arrows indicate relationships with direct evidence of a beneficial effect, black arrows represent likely indirect effects and dashed green arrows represent hypothesised beneficial effects.

## Eye Health Must Be Prioritised

This web-like effect on the SDGs, which has been recognised in the 2021 UN General Assembly resolution on “Vision for Everyone”,<sup>9</sup> shows that prioritising eye health is vital to global development. Eye health should receive political and financial support commensurate with its broad relevance. Policies and practices to scale up and expand eye health services should be embedded into multiple sectors: within the mainstream health agenda for achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC), and across education, social services and the workplace. Eye health services should encompass the spectrum of promotion, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation, to ensure that everyone receives the services they need, equitably and without financial hardship. Finally, eye health targets and indicators should be included in the performance framework for monitoring progress towards the SDGs and reported periodically by governments around the world.

- Zhang JH, Ramke J, Jan C et al. Advancing the Sustainable Development Goals through improving eye health: a scoping review. *Lancet Planetary Health*. February 2022. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196\(21\)00351-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196(21)00351-X)
- Access The *Lancet Global Health* Commission on Global Eye Health: [www.globaleyehhealthcommission.org](http://www.globaleyehhealthcommission.org)

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