



IAPB

2026 Global Summit for Eye Health

Draft Guidance

Zimbabwe Strategy to Secure Government Commitments

Purpose and Status of this Document

This **Draft Guidance** is intended to support the Government of Zimbabwe—particularly the **Ministry of Health & Child Care (MoHCC)**—in exploring, shaping, and securing potential national commitments ahead of the **2026 Global Summit for Eye Health**. It is *propositional* rather than prescriptive, and designed to guide structured consultation, alignment, and iterative refinement with relevant stakeholders.

Timeframes, sequencing, and activities are indicative, and should be adapted to Zimbabwe’s planning context and decision-making processes.

Overview of the Global Summit for Eye Health

The first-ever Global Summit for Eye Health will be hosted by the Government of Antigua and Barbuda in **November 2026**. The Summit will bring together Heads of State, Ministers of Health, global agencies, civil society, and development partners to:

- Promote national action on eye health;
- Strengthen systems and financing for eye care;
- Establish accountability frameworks aligned with **Universal Health Coverage (UHC)** and the WHO Integrated People-Centred Eye Care (IPEC) framework.

The Summit represents an opportunity for countries to publicly signal commitments aligned with national priorities and global goals.

Zimbabwe’s Eye Health Context

Zimbabwe faces a significant burden of eye disease and visual impairment, with many cases being preventable or treatable if services are accessible and scaled.

- According to WHO estimates, approximately **125,000 Zimbabweans are blind**, and around **half of these cases are due to cataracts**, a leading cause of avoidable blindness.
- Eye diseases—including refractive error, cataract, conjunctivitis, trauma, and glaucoma—are reported among the **top five causes of outpatient visits** in health facilities.
- Historical national strategies, such as the **Zimbabwe National Eye Health Strategy (2021–2025)**, provide policy direction for prevention and control of major eye diseases, though implementation challenges remain.
- Civil society organisations, including the **Council for the Blind Zimbabwe**, have provided long-standing preventive services, annual screenings, spectacle provision, and thousands of cataract surgeries annually.
- Partnerships between government, NGOs, and private sector actors such as **Old Mutual Zimbabwe** and the **Eye Institute** have supported community screening and surgical outreach programmes to address the backlog of preventable vision impairment.
- NGOs like **Vision Ability Zimbabwe** work with the MoHCC on inclusive eye health service delivery and strengthening referral systems.

These elements suggest a mixed landscape of need and opportunity—with policy frameworks and engaged non-state partners already in place, but with ongoing challenges in service coverage, workforce, equipment, and financing.

Why the Global Summit for Eye Health Is Important for Zimbabwe

The 2026 Summit offers Zimbabwe a timely platform to:

- **Consolidate and elevate eye health** within national health priorities, particularly within UHC and integrated care frameworks;
- **Showcase government leadership** on reducing avoidable blindness and strengthening primary and specialist eye care services;
- **Formalise measurable commitments** that align with existing strategies and strengthen accountability;
- **Mobilise partnerships and resources** from development partners, the private sector, and civil society;

- Contribute Zimbabwean perspectives and experience to **regional and global eye health dialogue**.

Participation in the Summit need not signal new policy directions; instead, it can serve to recognise and build upon ongoing efforts.

Characteristics of Potential Commitments

In discussions with the MoHCC and stakeholders, potential commitments should be:

- **New or scaled** actions and targets, building on current work rather than reiterating existing policies;
 - **Specific, measurable, and time-bound**, with clear indicators and accountabilities;
 - **Aligned with Zimbabwe's health priorities**, including UHC, NCD responses, and integrated primary care;
 - **Feasible and grounded** in national systems and capacities;
 - **Aligned with global frameworks**, including WHO IPEC and priorities emerging from the 2026 Summit.
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Pathway to Exploring Government Commitments

A phased approach helps align technical, cross-sectoral, and political engagement in a sequenced manner.

Phase 1: Engagement & Scoping

Indicative timing: February–March 2026

- Introduce the Summit concept internally at MoHCC.
- Share and discuss eye health data, current strategies, and key challenges.
- Identify potential government champions within MoHCC.

Phase 2: Multi-Stakeholder Consultation

Indicative timing: April–May 2026

- Engage with national eye health coordinators, NGOs, professional associations, and partners.

- Translate priority areas into draft commitment concepts.
- Ensure alignment across directorates relevant to eye health (e.g., NCDs, PHC, disability services).

Phase 3: Senior Government Engagement

Indicative timing: June–September 2026

- Refine commitments with senior officials.
- Clarify roles, responsibilities, and implementation pathways.
- Prepare public-facing commitment statements.

Phase 4: Submission & Preparation

Indicative timing: By World Sight Day (October 2026)

- Submit commitments through Summit tracking mechanisms.
- Prepare communication and stakeholder briefing materials.

Phase 5: Announcement & Implementation

Indicative timing: Post-Summit

- Support rollout of commitments, monitoring, and reporting frameworks.
- Foster accountability and peer learning.

Messaging and Positioning Considerations

Suggested messaging may emphasise:

- Zimbabwe’s commitment to **reducing avoidable blindness** and strengthening equitable access to eye care;
- Government partnership with civil society and private sector to extend services and reach underserved populations;
- Eye health’s role in broader health outcomes and **inclusion**;
- Alignment of commitments with national strategic health priorities and global eye health frameworks.

Illustrative Areas for Potential Commitments

These examples are illustrative and for discussion; final decisions rest with the Government of Zimbabwe:

- **Strengthening cataract surgical services and reducing surgical backlog;**
- **Integrating eye health services within primary health care and NCD programmes;**
- **Improving workforce capacity and equipment availability for eye care;**
- **Enhancing routine data collection and monitoring of eye health outcomes.**

Illustrative Commitment Examples

1. Cataract Service Scale-Up

Commitment: By 2029, increase the number of cataract surgeries performed annually through coordinated surgical camps, outreach, and strengthened referral systems.

Rationale: Cataract is a leading cause of blindness in Zimbabwe, and scaling services can reduce avoidable vision loss.

2. Integrated Eye Health within Primary Care

Commitment: By 2028, integrate basic eye screening and referral into routine primary health care services at all district health facilities.

Rationale: Early detection and referral can reduce the burden on tertiary services and improve outcomes.

3. Data & Monitoring Strengthening

Commitment: From 2027, strengthen routine data collection for key eye health indicators (e.g., refractive error coverage, cataract surgical coverage) within the national health information system.

Rationale: Better data fosters accountability, planning, and equitable service delivery.

Supporting Policy Frameworks and Evidence Base

This process and potential commitments should draw on:

- Zimbabwe National Eye Health Strategy 2021–2025 (current strategic policy for eye care);
- Routine MoHCC health management information systems and outpatient data;
- NGO and partner screening and outreach data (e.g., Council for the Blind, Vision Ability Zimbabwe);
- WHO IPEC frameworks and global eye health targets.

Looking Ahead

The **2026 Global Summit for Eye Health** presents Zimbabwe with a platform to consolidate progress, elevate national priorities for eye care, and demonstrate leadership on a regional and global stage. Through structured engagement and realistic commitments, Zimbabwe can advance equitable eye health outcomes while contributing to global accountability and progress.