

Policy influencing 2025 annual summary

Key achievements in Asia

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Introduction

This report is a summary of the key successes in policy influencing achieved across Asia in 2025, led by the country offices in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, with support from the Policy and Global Advocacy team, Campaigns 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 influencing 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 influencing please refer to the [Policy influencing data hub](#).

Key achievements

- Development of the new primary education programme in Bangladesh
- Integration of disability inclusion into comprehensive district eye care planning in Bangladesh
- Integration of eye health into the National Road Safety Policy in India
- Development of a disability policy in Chhattisgarh state in India
- Integration of disability-specific indicators into the National Indicator Framework
- Development and approval of Rules of Business for the implementation of the Disability Act in Pakistan
- Integration of the inclusive education module into all bachelor-level teacher training programmes in Pakistan

Bangladesh

Development of the new primary education programme

In 2025, Sightsavers continued to support the development of the new primary education programme (PEDP-5). Activities included organising high-level workshops in Sirajganj and Narsingdi, effectively translating grassroots evidence from the old PEDP-4 programme to influence the development of the new framework. Sightsavers engaged District Primary Education Officers, Social Service officials, and the Deputy Director of PEDP-4, to demonstrate practical inclusive classroom strategies. This bottom-up approach ensured that local stakeholders' insights reached central authorities, becoming a crucial factor in national policy discussions. The ideas from these local workshops were integrated into the national dialogue, resulting in their formal inclusion in the PEDP-5 draft. This success formalises inclusive education achievements into a nationwide, rights-based, scalable model for disability-specific interventions. Sightsavers organised a series of high-level national policy dialogues that effectively integrated the "triangulated model" developed in Sightsavers' consortium Disability Inclusive Development programme into Bangladesh's core education strategy.

Integration of disability inclusion into comprehensive district eye care planning

In 2025, Sightsavers supported district level eye care planning processes, focusing on the 17 programme districts. The plans cover district and sub-district level population, poverty levels, availability of eye care services, accessibility for persons with disabilities to eye care services, as well as prevalence of cataract, refractive error, presbyopia, glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy. In 2025, Sightsavers organised two partner meetings, to share technical expertise on disability inclusion, as well as best practices from the WHO Integrated People-

Centered Eye Care framework. Based on this information, comprehensive plans have been developed to provide eye health services. District eye care plans have been shared with respective health authorities. The political context in 2025 was challenging, with a transition government in place and a lack of focus on long-term development planning, but Sightsavers will continue its engagement in 2026, to advocate for the establishment of district level disability committees.

India

Development of a disability policy in Chhattisgarh state

With a federal government structure, the national disability policy is implemented through state level disability policies. In 2025, Sightsavers India along with its OPD partners worked closely with the Chhattisgarh State Department of Social Welfare and UNICEF to develop the 'Chhattisgarh State Welfare and Rehabilitation Policy for Persons with Disabilities 2025'. Sightsavers facilitated policy consultations, which successfully generated critical, evidence-based insights and recommendations for the draft policy. Sightsavers India presented technical assistance on the operationalisation of the policy across key areas such as inclusive education, employment, social protection and disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction. The new policy is due to be finalised in 2026 and will benefit an estimated 565,000 people with disabilities in the state.

Integration of eye health into the National Road Safety Policy

In 2025, Sightsavers engaged with partner organisations through the annual Vision and Road Safety conference, bringing together experts, policymakers, and stakeholders from the road safety and eye health sectors to deliberate on the critical role of clear vision in ensuring safer roads. The conference reinforced the recognition of eye health as the fifth 'E' of road safety alongside Engineering, Enforcement, Education, and Emergency Medical Services, calling for its systematic integration into road safety policies through mandatory vision screening for commercial drivers, alignment with UN Global Plan Pillar 3 and SPECS 2030, and evidence-based standards to reduce vision-related road traffic injuries. The initiative has moved vision and road safety into an institutionalised, multi-stakeholder policy space, demonstrated by political endorsement at the ministerial level, formal engagement with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) Road Safety Task Force, and commitments to vision integrated road safety planning and public-private partnerships to scale vision screening, enforcement and access to affordable spectacles for occupational workers in the national economy.

Development and implementation of the National Eye Health Action Plan

In 2025, Sightsavers India's advocacy translated into key policy shifts, elevating glaucoma and avoidable blindness as public health priorities within the National Eye Health Action

Plan, safeguarding affordable access to refractive error services, and advancing a National Eye Health Action Plan aligned with WHO global indicators for government implementation. These institutional changes have driven system-wide impact, enabling the scale-up of evidence-based models through government adoption and contributing to measurable national gains, including a 10% increase in cataract surgeries to 9.8 million and a rise in India's cataract surgical rate to 6,911.

Integration of disability-specific indicators into the National Indicator Framework

In 2025, Sightsavers engaged with the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOSPI), the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, UN Resident Coordinator's Office (UNRCO), as well as Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), and successfully advocated for the inclusion of disability-specific indicators in India's National Indicator Framework (NIF) for SDG reporting. Building on its SDG engagement in previous years, Sightsavers India and OPDs proposed a list of 22 disability-inclusive indicators to MOSPI and UNRCO. After a series of technical consultations, mapping data sources, and assessing government data systems, 13 disability-inclusive indicators were officially adopted into the revised NIF. These span SDGs 1, 4, 8, 10, 11, and 17. For the first time since India adopted the SDGs, national reporting will reflect data on disability-inclusive development—across poverty reduction, education, employment, health, and urban inclusion. This integration fills a long-standing data gap and affirms the centrality of persons with disabilities in the national development agenda.

Development of inclusive guidelines on conducting competitive written public examinations

In 2025, Sightsavers took forward an advocacy initiative to develop inclusive guidelines for persons with disabilities in written public examinations for employment or admission to professional or technical courses. This emerged following concerns raised by key national institutions such as the Department of Personnel and Training, and the National Recruitment Agency, regarding the credibility and transparency of examinations taken by persons with disabilities using scribes. Examining bodies have reported instances of malpractice, including collusion between candidates and privately arranged scribes, undermining the credibility of examinations. This has resulted in confusion and harassment of genuine students and youths with disabilities during their appearance for the competitive examinations. It was in this context that Sightsavers engaged with OPD and government partners, to develop a detailed guideline students with disabilities and for the institutions who are conducting such competitive examinations. Following stakeholder consultations, to draft guideline was produced in mid-2025, with Sightsavers India presenting recommendations to make it more inclusive for candidates with blindness and low vision. The draft is expected to be finalised by the end of February 2026 and will benefit more than 7 million students with disabilities in the country in their higher professional education and employment related competitive exams.

Pakistan

Development and approval of Rules of Business for the implementation of the Disability Act

With a federal structure, each province in Pakistan has its own Persons with Disabilities Act, with their implementation governed by Rules of Business (RoBs). In 2025, Sightsavers continued its support for the development of RoBs at provincial level, providing technical support through the community based inclusive development (CBID) disability rights network. In Punjab, the RoBs were developed and approved in 2025, an important step forward for the implementation of disability rights. The RoBs in Gilgit Baltistan have already been approved. Meanwhile, in the province of Balochistan, a Disability Act was passed in 2017, and the Rules of Business were also approved in late 2025 to enforce the Act.

Incorporation of eye health indicators into the HMIS in Sindh and Punjab

After rigorous and sustained advocacy efforts led by Sightsavers, two new eye health indicators have now been successfully integrated into the District Health Information Software 2 (DHIS2) system in the provinces of Sindh and Punjab. This significant milestone marks a major step forward in institutionalising eye health data within government systems. The two indicators (number of refractive errors diagnosed and number of patients referred for glasses) will be reported on a daily basis. The data collected will be disaggregated by age and gender, providing greater visibility into service delivery and access across population groups. While the current indicators do not yet include detailed classifications of refractive errors, this development still represents a critical foundation for more comprehensive data collection in the future. The inclusion of these indicators allows for more systematic tracking of refractive error and optical-related conditions and will help estimate the need for government investment.

Endorsement of the first diploma level dispensing opticianry course

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. This course is the first-ever diploma programme in opticianry Pakistan, which will produce a skilled workforce of opticians and was formally launched in 2024. In 2025, Sightsavers continued to engage with the Punjab Medical Faculty, to enable an increase in enrolment for 2025 – 2027 intake. Beyond this, Sightsavers initiated the process of registering the course with the Allied Health Professional Council, and secured its endorsement. This registration will not only enable the accreditation process at national level but also will pave the way for other public and private institutes to adopt this course as a regular programme.

Integration of the inclusive education module into all bachelor-level teacher training programmes

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, to introduce trainee teachers to the concepts of inclusive education for children with disabilities. In 2024, Sightsavers consulted with different universities and training institutes to develop a training on inclusive education for pre-service and in service teachers. In 2025, the course was officially approved by the curriculum wing of the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan and National Accreditation Council of Teachers Education (NACTE). This paves the way for the inclusive education module to be integrated into all bachelor-level teacher training programmes in Pakistan.

Development of an inclusive early warning system

In 2025, in collaboration with Aging, Disability and Diversity Taskforce (ADDTF) and DeafTawk, Sightsavers supported the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) in the development of Pakistan's first Inclusive Early Warning System (IEWS) ensuring disaster alerts are accessible for persons with disabilities, older persons, and all vulnerable groups. This exciting development was launched by the NDMA in a prestigious ceremony. This milestone represents a significant advancement in disaster resilience across Pakistan. Going forward, all early warning alerts will be accessible to blind and deaf communities through specially designed accessible digital and physical formats. This inclusive approach ensures that critical information reaches those who have been historically marginalised in disaster response.