



School Health Program Karachi

Progress and Impact Report

Vision Health Care Foundation (VHCF), Pakistan

December 2024 – June 2026

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Executive Summary

Between December 2024 and June 2026, Vision Healthcare Foundation (VHCF) implemented an Integrated School Health Programme across Karachi, demonstrating how schools can serve as an effective platform for improving children's health, educational participation, and overall well-being. Initially supported by CBM International and subsequently sustained through VHCF's own institutional resources, the programme evolved from a school eye health initiative into a comprehensive model integrating vision care, hearing and ear health, nutrition, disability inclusion, health education, referral services, teacher capacity building, digital health, and systems strengthening.

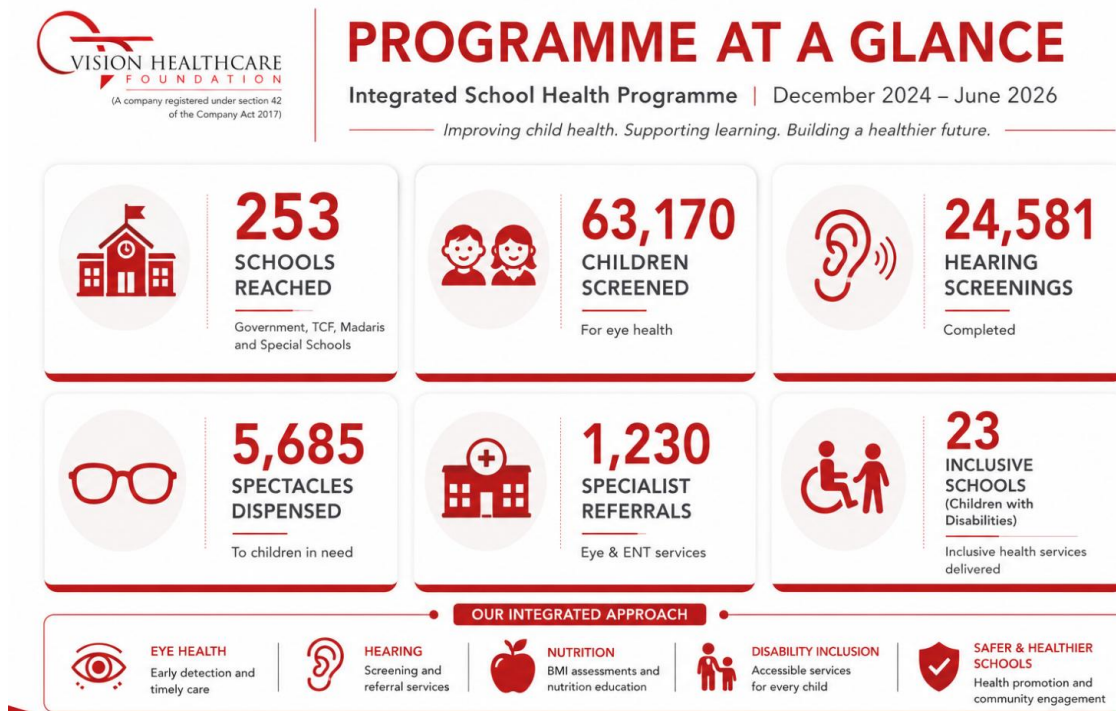
During the reporting period, integrated health services were delivered across **253 schools**, including **23 special education schools**, reaching children enrolled in government schools, The Citizens Foundation (TCF) schools, madaris, and special education institutions. Overall, **63,170 children received eye screening, 24,581 underwent hearing screening, and 14,794 received nutritional assessments**. The programme also provided **5,930 refractions, dispensed 5,685 prescription spectacles, and facilitated 1230 referrals for specialized eye and ENT care**, ensuring children requiring further management accessed appropriate services through established referral pathways.

Beyond service delivery, the programme focused on improving children's learning and participation in school. Early identification and timely treatment of vision, hearing, and nutritional problems enabled many children to engage more confidently in classroom activities, while teacher training strengthened schools' capacity to recognize health concerns and support referral compliance. More than **1,200 children with disabilities** benefited from inclusive health services, supported by adapted screening approaches and assistive devices that promoted equitable access to education.

The programme also contributed to strengthening provincial systems. Key achievements included establishing the Provincial School Eye Health Working Group, supporting the development of the Provincial School Eye Health Plan, strengthening collaboration between the Health and Education Departments, implementing standardized referral pathways, and introducing the Peek Vision digital platform for electronic data capture, referral tracking, and programme monitoring. VHCF also conducted Pakistan's first Rapid Assessment of Refractive Errors (RARE) Survey in Karachi West, generating critical evidence to inform provincial planning and future investments in integrated eye health services.

Importantly, following the completion of donor funding, Vision Healthcare Foundation successfully continued programme implementation using its own institutional resources, demonstrating sustainability and organizational commitment. The programme provides a practical and scalable model for delivering integrated, inclusive, and digitally enabled school health services that improve children's health, support educational outcomes, and strengthen health systems. It offers valuable lessons for expanding comprehensive school health services across Sindh and contributes directly to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals through equitable access to quality health and education for every child.

Programme Contributions at a Glance



Improving Child Health

- **63,170** eye screenings conducted
- **24,581** hearing screenings completed
- **14,794** nutritional (BMI) assessments undertaken
- **5,685** children received prescription spectacles
- **1230** children referred for specialized eye and ENT services

Promoting Inclusive Education

- Services delivered in **more than 250 schools**
- **23 special education schools** reached
- **1,200+ children with disabilities** benefited from inclusive health services
- **20 assistive devices** provided to support learning and participation

Strengthening School Systems

- **1,761 teachers** equipped to identify health concerns and facilitate referrals
- Standardized referral pathways established
- School-based health promotion integrated into routine activities

Building Sustainable Systems

- Provincial School Eye Health Working Group established
- Provincial School Eye Health Plan developed
- RARE Survey completed to inform evidence-based planning
- Programme successfully sustained by Vision Healthcare Foundation following donor funding

Background

Healthy children are more likely to attend school regularly, participate actively in learning, and achieve their full potential. Yet many school-aged children experience preventable health conditions—including uncorrected refractive errors, hearing impairment, poor nutrition, and disabilities—that remain undetected and untreated. These conditions not only affect children's health but also influence educational attainment, social inclusion, and long-term development.

Recognizing these interconnected challenges, Vision Healthcare Foundation expanded the School Health Programme beyond eye health to establish an integrated, school-based health model. The programme combined vision screening, hearing and ear health, nutrition assessment, disability inclusion, health education, referral services, and digital monitoring into a single, coordinated package delivered within schools.

This approach minimizes disruption to learning, improves early detection of health conditions, and strengthens linkages between schools, families, and healthcare providers.

Programme Intervention

The programme adopted a child-centred, school-based approach that integrated preventive health services into the education system. By delivering multiple health interventions during a single school visit, the programme reduced missed opportunities for early diagnosis, improved access to care, minimized disruption to learning, and strengthened coordination between schools, families, and health services. The integrated package consisted of:

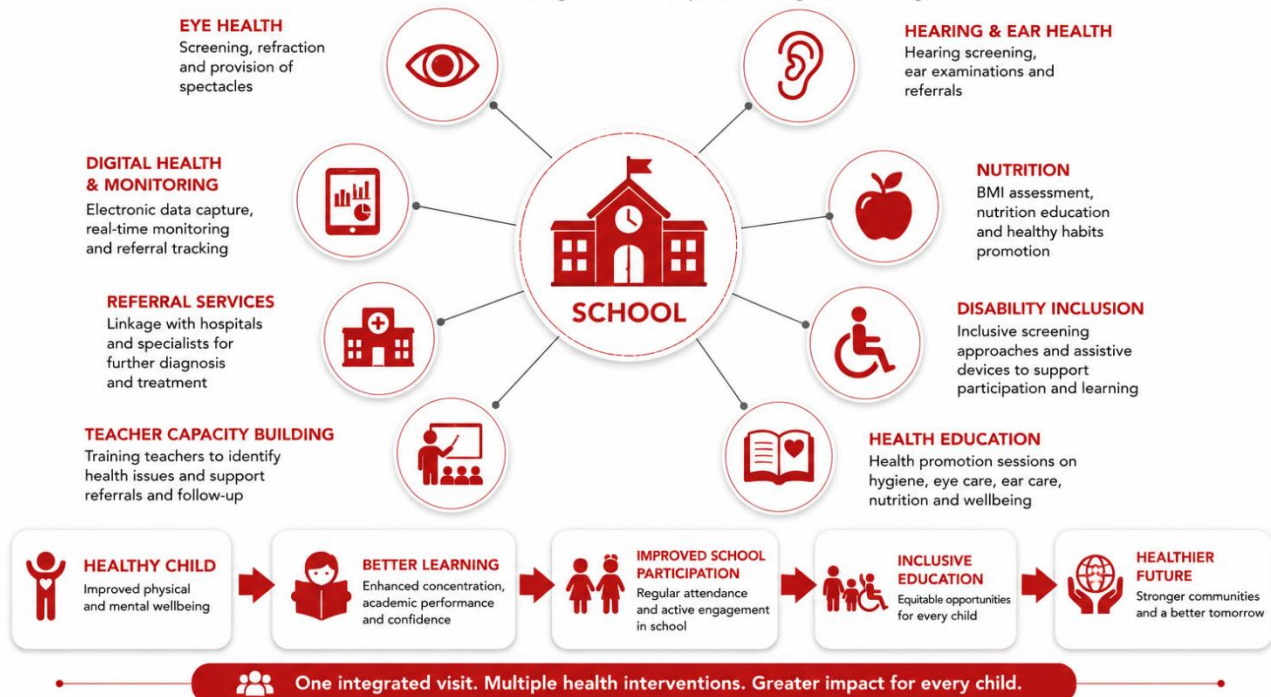
- Vision screening and comprehensive refraction
- Hearing and ENT screening
- Nutrition assessment (Body Mass Index)
- Disability-inclusive screening and functional assessment
- Health education for students, parents and teachers
- Structured referral and follow-up
- Teacher capacity building
- Digital data collection and programme monitoring
- Government engagement and systems strengthening

By integrating multiple health interventions into a single school visit, the programme reduced missed opportunities for diagnosis while improving efficiency and access to care.

INTEGRATED SCHOOL HEALTH MODEL

How the Programme Works

A holistic, child-centred approach delivering multiple health interventions through schools to improve learning and wellbeing.



Methodology

The programme was implemented through a standardized, multi-disciplinary service delivery model.

Planning and School Engagement

Schools were selected in coordination with education authorities and partner organizations. Prior to each visit, programme teams coordinated with school management to obtain consent, schedule screening activities, and orient teachers regarding programme objectives and referral processes.

School-based Health Screening

Children received integrated health assessments through sequential screening stations.

The screening package included:

- **Eye Health:** Visual acuity assessment using age-appropriate vision charts, followed by objective and subjective refraction for children who failed vision screening.
- **Hearing & ENT:** Hearing screening using MAICO screening audiometers and ear examination using **otoscopes** to identify hearing impairment and common ear conditions.
- **Nutrition:** Height and weight measurements were recorded to calculate **Body Mass Index (BMI)** and identify children requiring nutritional counselling or referral.
- **Disability Inclusion:** Children with disabilities were screened using adapted approaches to ensure equitable participation and access to services.

Clinical Assessment and Referral

- Children requiring further assessment received comprehensive clinical evaluation by qualified professionals.
- Referral pathways were established with **Khairunnisa Eye Hospital** and partner ENT and hearing facilities (Earnet) for specialized management.
- Referral compliance was monitored through a structured tracking system, while transportation support was facilitated for vulnerable families whenever required.

Capacity Building

Teachers and active school children (Vision Scouts) were trained to:

- Recognize early signs of vision and hearing problems
- Identify children requiring referral
- Promote healthy classroom practices
- Support follow-up after referral

This strengthened school ownership and promoted sustainability beyond the project period.

Community Engagement

Parents and communities were engaged through:

- Health education sessions and celebration of International days like World Sight Day
- Parent meetings
- Teacher orientation sessions
- Distribution of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials
- Disability-inclusive awareness campaigns

These activities improved awareness, encouraged timely care-seeking, and strengthened community participation.

Digital Monitoring and Quality Assurance

The programme utilized digital systems for routine programme monitoring, electronic beneficiary records, referral tracking, and performance reporting to support evidence-based decision-making and continuous quality improvement.

The school screening methodology follows a systematic, child-centred, and evidence-based approach aligned with the WHO Implementation Handbook. It ensures high-quality vision and hearing screening through standardized protocols, effective referral pathways, robust data management, continuous quality assurance, and collaboration with schools, families, and health services to promote early detection and timely intervention.

Quality assurance was maintained through standardized clinical protocols, regular supervision, digital monitoring, and continuous review of programme performance. This ensured consistent service quality, accurate data collection, timely referrals, and evidence-based decision-making throughout implementation.

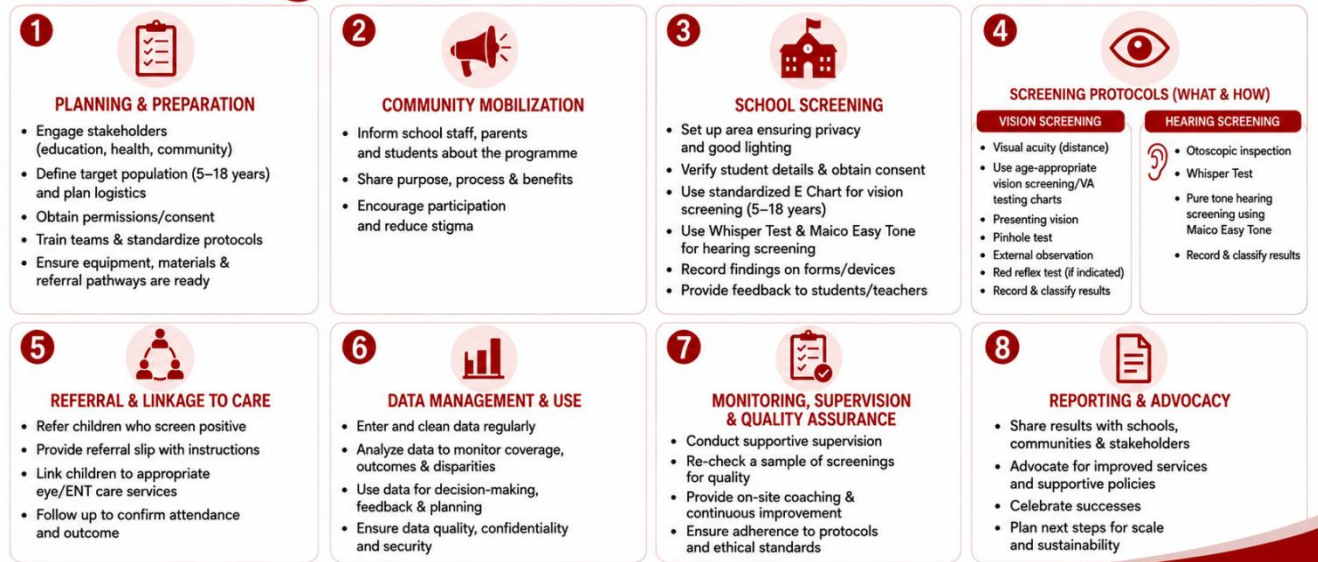
METHODOLOGY: SCHOOL SCREENING FOR SENSORY IMPAIRMENTS

Aligned with the WHO Implementation Handbook



Target Age Group: 5 to 18 Years

Inclusive • Child-centered • Confidential • Evidence-based



Ensuring early detection through standardized, school-based vision and hearing screening.

Detailed Achievements

Phase I: Donor-Supported Implementation (CBM International)

Duration: December 2024 – December 2025

Overview

With support from CBM International, Vision Healthcare Foundation implemented an integrated School Health Program across Karachi, reaching underserved children through public schools, TCF schools, madaris, and special education institutions. The project established the foundation for integrated school health in Sindh by combining vision, hearing, nutrition, referral systems, capacity building, and policy advocacy.

Key Achievements

Indicator	Achievement
Schools Covered	202
Special Education Schools	21
Eye Screenings	51,475
Hearing Screenings	14,416
Nutrition Assessments (BMI)	4,664
Positive Eye Cases	4,684
Spectacles Dispensed	4,569
Ophthalmology Referrals	186
Referral Completion	97%

Teachers Trained	1,600
Assistive Devices Provided	20
IEC Materials Distributed	40,000
RARE Survey Prevalence	11.6%

Eye Health

Achievements

- 51,475 children screened
- 4,684 children diagnosed with refractive error
- 4,569 spectacles dispensed
- 186 children referred for specialist eye care

Hearing & ENT

Indicator	Achievement
Hearing Screening	14,416
Positive Cases	555
Prevalence	4%

Nutrition

Indicator	Achievement
BMI Assessments	4,664

Capacity Building

Indicator	Achievement
Teachers Trained	1,600
Schools Covered	202

Training covered:

- Vision screening
- Child eye health
- Referral pathways
- Classroom identification

Children with Disabilities

Indicator	Achievement
Planned Schools	15
Schools Reached	21
Children Benefited	1,023
Assistive Devices	20

Community Engagement

- 40,000 IEC materials distributed
- Parent awareness sessions

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- Teacher awareness sessions
 - Community meetings
 - PEEK awareness activities

Systems Strengthening

Major milestones included:

- Provincial School Eye Health Working Group established
- Provincial School Eye Health Plan developed
- Government Health Department engaged
- Government Education Department engaged
- Technical support from CBM International
- RARE Survey completed (11.6% prevalence)

Digital Eye Health (Peek Vision)

One of the major innovations introduced during the CBM-supported implementation was the adoption of the **Peek Vision platform** to support school eye health services.

Key Contributions

- Digital visual acuity screening using validated Peek Vision Acuity.
- Electronic beneficiary registration and data management through peek capture.
- Real-time referral generation and follow-up tracking.
- Performance monitoring through digital dashboards.
- Improved programme quality, efficiency, and accountability.
- Enhanced evidence generation for planning and reporting.

This digital approach strengthened service delivery while supporting standardized, high-quality eye health screening across participating schools.

Rapid Assessment of Refractive Errors (RARE) Survey – Karachi West

As part of its commitment to evidence-based planning and strengthening eye health services, Vision Healthcare Foundation, conducted Pakistan's first Rapid Assessment of Refractive Errors (RARE) survey in District Karachi West during 2025. The survey aimed to generate reliable population-level evidence on the prevalence of refractive errors, spectacle coverage, and barriers to accessing refractive services among individuals aged **15–50 years**, providing a foundation for planning sustainable primary eye care services.

Using a multistage cluster random sampling methodology, **2,939 individuals** were examined, achieving an excellent **94.8% response rate**, reflecting strong community participation and the robustness of the survey methodology. Standardized visual acuity assessment, objective and subjective refraction, and ocular examination were undertaken by trained eye care professionals following internationally recognized RARE protocols.

The survey found that **11.6%** of participants had refractive errors, while **6.9%** had uncorrected refractive errors affecting their vision. Females were significantly more likely to experience refractive errors than males, highlighting important gender disparities in access to eye care. Myopia was identified as the most common refractive error, particularly among younger age groups.

Despite refractive errors being easily treatable, access to correction remained limited. Only **40.5%** of individuals requiring distance vision correction were using spectacles, leaving nearly **60%** without appropriate visual correction. The most frequently reported barriers to accessing services included **lack of awareness (48.3%)**, **cost of spectacles (18.2%)**, and **reluctance to wear spectacles (13.3%)**, demonstrating the need for greater community awareness and affordable eye care services.

The survey also demonstrated the effectiveness of refractive correction, with **94.3%** of participants achieving functional vision after appropriate correction. Those who did not improve were primarily affected by conditions such as amblyopia, cataract, and posterior segment diseases, emphasizing the importance of timely referral and comprehensive eye care services.

The findings provide critical evidence to guide provincial eye health planning and reinforce the need to strengthen **school eye health programmes**, **primary eye care services**, and **community-based vision centres**. The RARE survey has become an important evidence base supporting the expansion of Vision Healthcare Foundation's Integrated School Health Programme and contributes to informed policy development aimed at reducing avoidable visual impairment across Sindh.



Training of program team for RARE survey by renowned epidemiologist , Dr Zahid Jadoon

Phase II: Vision Healthcare Foundation Self-Funded Continuation

Duration: January 2026 – June 2026

Overview

Following the successful completion of the donor-funded project, **Vision Healthcare Foundation continued the programme using its own institutional resources**, ensuring uninterrupted delivery of integrated school health services and demonstrating long-term sustainability.

Key Achievements

Indicator	Achievement
Eye Screenings	11,695
Hearing Screenings	10,165
Nutrition Assessments	10,130
Refractions Performed	1,361
Spectacles Dispensed	1,116
Ophthalmology Referrals	155
ENT Referrals	334
Community Health Camps	7

Eye Health

- 11,695 children screened
- 1,361 refractions performed
- 1,116 spectacles dispensed
- 155 ophthalmology referrals

Hearing & ENT

Indicator	Achievement
Hearing Screening	10,165
ENT Referrals	334

Nutrition

Indicator	Achievement
BMI Assessments	10,130

Community Outreach

Additional initiatives included:

- World Hearing Day campaign
- ENT specialist outreach clinic
- Parent awareness sessions
- Teacher engagement
- Disability-inclusive screening

- Seven community health camps

Overall Programme Achievements

(December 2024 – June 2026)

Indicator	Total
Eye Screenings	63,170
Hearing Screenings	24,581
Nutrition Assessments	14,794
Spectacles Dispensed	5,685
Ophthalmology Referrals	341
ENT Referrals	889
Teachers Trained	1,600
Schools Covered	253
Special Education Schools	23

This section highlights the programme's contribution beyond service delivery, demonstrating improvements in child health, educational participation, disability inclusion, community engagement, and health system strengthening.

Key Achievements and Milestones

Integrated Health Services

The programme successfully transformed traditional school eye health into a comprehensive school health model.

Strengthened Referral System

- Referral network established with hospitals and specialist clinics
- Referral tracking system operational
- Transportation support for vulnerable families
- **Overall, 60% referral completion rate**
- Continuity of care strengthened beyond school screening

Capacity Building

- **1761 teachers** trained across **253 schools**
- 424 vision scouts trained
- Teachers equipped to identify vision and hearing problems and support referrals
- School-level ownership strengthened

Disability Inclusion

- **23 special education schools** reached
- **1200+ children with disabilities** served

-
- **20 assistive devices** provided
 - Inclusive screening protocols implemented across all special schools

Community Engagement

- **40,000+ IEC materials** distributed
- Parent awareness sessions conducted
- Teacher awareness sessions implemented
- Community engagement meetings organized
- PEEK awareness activities conducted

Systems Strengthening

The programme moved beyond service delivery by contributing to provincial health system development.

Key milestones included:

- Provincial School Eye Health Working Group established
- Provincial School Eye Health Plan developed
- Government Health and Education Departments actively engaged
- Multi-sector collaboration strengthened
- Technical support provided by CBM International

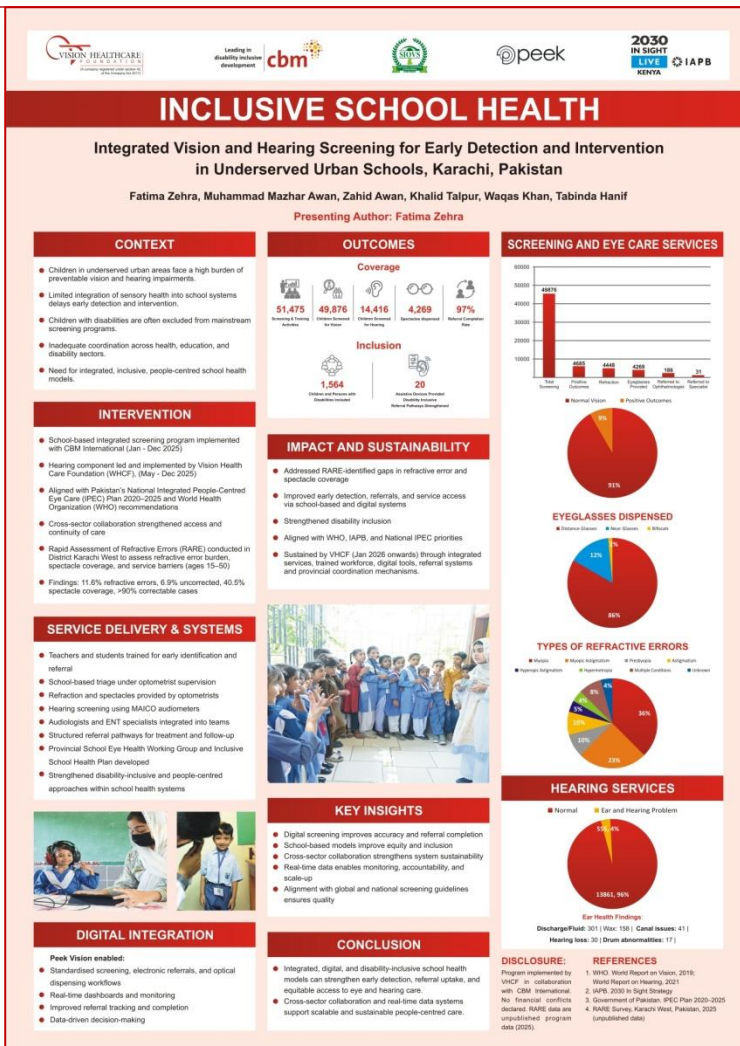
Evidence Generation

The programme generated important evidence through Pakistan's first Rapid Assessment of Refractive Errors (RARE) Survey in District Karachi West. The survey identified an 11.6% prevalence of refractive errors among individuals aged 15–50 years and highlighted significant gaps in spectacle coverage, providing critical evidence for provincial planning and strengthening refractive error services.

Knowledge Sharing and Global Advocacy

Throughout the implementation period, Vision Healthcare Foundation actively disseminated programme evidence, innovations, and lessons learned through national, regional, and international platforms, contributing to policy dialogue, knowledge exchange, and advocacy for integrated school health and eye care.

Key achievements included:



For more details: <https://vhcf.pk/blogs/f/vhcf-participation-in-iapb-2030-in-sight-live-%E2%80%93-nairobi-kenya>

• Programme findings and recommendations were presented to the **Provincial School Eye Health Working Group**, contributing to the development and implementation of the Provincial School Eye Health Plan for Sindh.

• Technical engagement with the Health and Education Departments strengthened collaboration and promoted the integration of school eye health within broader school health and primary healthcare systems.

• The programme was showcased at the **IAPB 2030 IN SIGHT LIVE** conference in Nairobi, Kenya, where Vision Healthcare Foundation shared Pakistan's experience in implementing an integrated, disability-inclusive, and digitally enabled School Health Programme with an international audience of eye health leaders, policymakers, researchers, and development partners.

• Fatima Zehra, Director, Programs and Communications, Vision Healthcare Foundation also presented a scientific poster at the **IAPB 2030 IN SIGHT LIVE** meeting in Nairobi,

highlighting programme innovations, implementation experiences, and evidence generated through the integrated school health model. The presentation facilitated international knowledge exchange and demonstrated the programme's contribution to global efforts to strengthen school eye health and integrated people-centred eye care.

- These national and international engagements enhanced the visibility of Vision Healthcare Foundation's work, fostered collaboration with global partners, and reinforced the programme as a scalable model for integrated, inclusive, and sustainable school health services aligned with the 2030 In Sight Strategy.

Success Stories

A Sound Future for Minahil

When our integrated school health team visited Minahil Imam Baksh's school, a simple hearing screening revealed a challenge that had been affecting her every day. Minahil was struggling to hear from her left ear, making it difficult to understand conversations, follow classroom instructions, and fully participate in lessons. Like many children with undetected hearing problems, her condition had the potential to impact both her learning and confidence.

A comprehensive ear assessment identified a **perforated left eardrum with hearing loss**. Recognizing the importance of early intervention, Minahil was promptly referred to an ENT specialist for further evaluation and treatment.

With timely medical care, appropriate treatment, and regular follow-up, Minahil's condition improved significantly. As her hearing improved, so did her participation in school. She became more confident in the classroom, engaged more actively with her teachers and classmates, and was able to follow lessons with greater ease.

Today, Minahil is thriving in school with renewed confidence and enthusiasm. Her story highlights how **early screening, timely referral, and access to quality ear and hearing care can transform a child's educational journey and overall well-being**. It is a powerful reminder that investing in school health services enables children not only to hear better, but also to learn better, participate fully, and reach their potential.



From the Classroom to Clear Vision

When Hoorain, a primary school student at The Citizens Foundation School, took part in a routine school eye screening, neither she nor her family knew that she had been living with an undiagnosed polar cataract in her right eye. With vision reduced to **6/60**, everyday classroom activities had become increasingly difficult, affecting her ability to learn and fully participate in school.

The screening team promptly identified the condition and referred Hoorain to **Khairun Nisa Eye Hospital** for further assessment and treatment. Through the programme, she received comprehensive eye examinations, cataract surgery, medicines, follow-up care, and family counselling at no cost, ensuring that financial barriers did not stand in the way of restoring her sight.

On **22 December 2025**, Hoorain underwent successful cataract surgery. Following recovery and post-operative care, her vision improved significantly, enabling her to return to school with greater confidence and independence. Her family shared their heartfelt gratitude, describing the intervention as a turning point that gave their daughter a brighter future.

Hoorain's journey highlights the transformative impact of school-based eye health programmes. A simple screening led to the early detection of a serious eye condition, timely referral, and life-changing treatment—demonstrating how accessible, child-centred eye care can protect children's vision, strengthen educational outcomes, and help every child reach their full potential.

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Education Minister Sardar Ali Shah Receiving a shield from Dr Mazhar Awan CEO VHCF on inauguration of the school health working group on the occasion of World Sight Day 2025.



Group Photo of School Health Group launch and meeting on World Sight Day 2025.
<https://vhcf.pk/blogs/f/world-sight-day-2025-a-vision-shared-a-mission-continued> (for more details)



Organized a screening camp for sensory impairments with Pakistan Center for Autism on World Disability Day and provided children with disabilities required services and care
<https://vhcf.pk/blogs/f/report-on-world-disability-day-celebration-%E2%80%93-3rd-december-2025> – For more details



Eye Screening

Myopia Awareness Week organized in schools for greater awareness and correction – For more details:
<https://vhcf.pk/blogs/f/myopia-awareness-week-2026>

Sustainability

Following completion of donor-supported implementation, Vision Healthcare Foundation continued the programme using its own institutional resources from January to June 2026, ensuring uninterrupted delivery of integrated school health services. This transition demonstrates strong institutional ownership and highlights the feasibility of sustaining essential child health services beyond external funding while creating a scalable model for future government and development partner collaboration.

Challenges

Despite significant achievements, several implementation challenges were encountered:

- Delayed referral uptake due to financial and transportation barriers.
- Coordinating multiple health services within limited school schedules.
- Sustaining long-term government ownership and institutional integration beyond project-supported implementation

Lessons Learned

The programme generated several important lessons for future scale-up:

- Delivering multiple health interventions during a single school visit is efficient, cost-effective, and well accepted by schools.
- Teachers play a critical role in early identification and referral of children requiring care.
- Strong referral systems are essential to convert screening into improved health outcomes.
- Disability inclusion is most effective when embedded throughout programme design rather than implemented as a separate activity.
- Digital monitoring systems improve programme quality, accountability, and decision-making.
- Multi-sector collaboration between health, education, and development partners is essential for institutionalizing school health programmes.

Future Directions

Vision Healthcare Foundation remains committed to working with government, development partners, schools, and communities to scale this integrated model across Sindh and beyond, ensuring that every child has equitable access to quality health services and an opportunity to learn, thrive, and reach their full potential. Priority areas include:

- Expanding integrated school health services to additional districts.
- Introducing **school oral health and dental hygiene services** beginning in July 2026.
- Collaboration for nutritional services.
- Strengthening digital health information systems and referral tracking.
- Enhancing government ownership and integration within provincial education and health systems.
- Expanding disability-inclusive services and assistive support.
- Using programme evidence to inform policy and guide future investments in school health.

This integrated model demonstrates how schools can serve as an effective platform for delivering equitable, preventive, and child-centred health services that improve both health and educational outcomes.

Alignment with Sustainable Development Goals

Programme Contribution	SDG
School Health Services	SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-being
Inclusive Education	SDG 4 – Quality Education
Disability Inclusion	SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities
Government Partnerships	SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals