

India changes definition of blindness, opts for WHO criteria

Highlights

- According to the new definition, a person who is unable to count fingers from a distance of three metres would be considered "blind"
- Earlier stipulation was six metres and was adopted in 1976
- The aim of revising the definition is also to be able to generate data which can be compared with global estimates



India has changed its over four- decade-old definition of blindness, bringing it in line with the **WHO** criteria, a step that would drastically bring down the number of people considered "blind" in the country.

According to the new definition, a person who is unable to count fingers from a distance of three metres would be considered "blind" as against the earlier stipulation of six metres, which was adopted in 1976.

The aim of revising the definition is also to be able to generate data which can be compared with global estimates and achieve the WHO goal of reducing the blindness prevalence of India to 0.3 per cent of the total population by 2020.

The notification in this regard has been issued by the Union Health Ministry.

Going by the new definition, the population of blind people in India will reduce from 1.20 crore (as per National Blindness survey 2007 data) to 80 lakh.

India has to also work hard to achieve the goal set by the WHO which recommends reducing the

prevalence of blindness to 0.3 per cent of its population by the year 2020 to achieve the elimination of avoidable blindness.

The decision of the Government of India wherein the revised parameters which would serve to define blindness has reduced the number of people who would be labeled as “blind” by almost 33%. S K Nair, Secretary General, NSPB –India said, “It would now be relatively easier for the India to achieve the WHO target of 0.3% for blindness prevalence amongst its population.” Dr Rajiv Mohan, Executive President said, “NSPB India would work very closely with the Government of India to achieve these targets and prevent blindness in India.”