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## **Rapid assessment of Cataract Blindness in age 40 years and above in District Skardu, Baltistan, Northern Areas, Pakistan**

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In 1995, a group of programme managers and community eye care workers developed a simple and quick method called Rapid Cataract Assessment to estimate cataract load at district level. That would provide prompt and relevant information to planners and decision-makers for efficient and effective planning of cataract surgical services at the district level. Rapid Assessment of Cataract in age 40 years and above was carried out in district Skardu, Northern Areas, Pakistan. The objectives were to determine the prevalence of cataract blindness in age 40 years and above, the age and sex distribution of cataract blindness, the prevalence of aphakia and pseudophakia, the cataract surgical coverage, assessment of provision of services for cataract surgery, assessment of visual outcome of cataract surgery and to identify barriers to the uptake of cataract surgery. The study design involved Cluster Random Sampling. The prevalence of cataract blindness in the study was 3.17%, 2.65% in males and 3.74% in females. Bilateral aphakia was found to be 1.39% and bilateral pseudoaphakia as 0.32%. Cataract surgical coverage for eyes was 21.84%. The percentage of first eye operated was 68.18% and of second eye was 31.81%. Cataract surgical services were provided mainly by the Government hospitals (65%). Visual outcome in 7.35% aphakic eyes and 40% pseudophakic eyes was 6/6 - 6/18. Major barriers to the uptake of cataract surgery were identified as need not felt as can see with other eye (18%), Year of surgery (16%) and 'too old for surgery' (15%). This Rapid Cataract Assessment provides an insight into societal fears and community concerns that need to be addressed hand in hand with infrastructure and human resource development and eye health education campaign.