Making eye health visible
Community eye health in Pakistan

**THE CHALLENGE**

Rates of vision impairment are rising in Pakistan. In many areas, eye health services are strained. Ophthalmologists at district hospitals report heavy caseloads, having to respond to eye health and vision impairment issues which could be resolved elsewhere.

Talagang tehsil is an administrative area situated in Punjab province, with a population of around 400,000 people. It has a higher than average prevalence of blindness compared to the rest of Pakistan.

A third of people aged over 50 in Talagang are affected by vision impairment, yet treatment for the most common causes is readily available. Eye health providers do not have access to the data they need to understand why people are not accessing treatment.

**THE SOLUTION**

A partnership of eye health organisations used Peek Solutions to deliver a community eye health programme in Talagang.

Pakistan has a well-established network of community health workers, local and regional health centres and hospitals. Nurses, optometrists and dispensing opticians were trained to use Peek technology to screen, register and follow patients’ progress from screening to diagnosis and treatment.

Community health workers promoted the screening and encouraged people to attend. Following screening, people requiring further investigation were referred to local optometrists for full examinations, with dispensing opticians providing spectacles where needed. The small proportion of patients whose needs could not be met through optometrists or local health centres were referred to hospital for further treatment.
“Peek has helped us to transform how we manage eye health caseloads, greatly increasing access to eye care at local health centres and allowing hospital staff to focus on more complex cases.”

Dr Zahid Awan, ophthalmologist and Inclusive Eye Health Project Manager for CBM in Pakistan

THE IMPACT

In just over a year, over 30000 people were screened for eye health issues using Peek. Around half were referred for a full eye examination.

Before Peek was introduced, up to 40% of eye health consultations in hospitals were related to refractive errors, which can usually be treated outside the hospital by an optometrist prescribing glasses. Since Peek was introduced, this proportion has been reduced to less than 1%. As a result, hospital eye health services are in a better position to attend to complex eye conditions such as cataract, one of the leading causes of blindness in the area.

The Peek system also allowed health service managers to regularly review how patients were progressing through the system, allowing inequities and gaps in services - such as gender imbalance in screening participation - to be identified and resolved.

WHY PEEK?

The data revealed by Peek allowed the programme partners to continuously improve their programme - compliance with referrals to eye exams increased from 58% to 82% over six months. By increasing the proportion of people accessing local eye health services, hospital resources can now be used more efficiently.

NEXT STEPS

The Talagrag community eye health programme using Peek is now fully established and a school eye health programme has launched. There are plans to integrate the school and community programmes to identify vulnerable groups such as children not enrolled in school. This is a gap in existing eye health programmes and a significant step towards achieving universal eye health in the region.

ABOUT PEEK

Peek Vision powers eye health organisations with technology-enabled tools and processes to improve how they deliver care. The result is better eye health for the millions of people worldwide who need it.