



VFI- BMC Bal Drishti

Progress Report (Feb 2026 - Sep 2026)



Correction of refractive error and other eye - care services to prevent early blindness

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Executive Summary

The BMC-VFI Bal Drishti Project has recorded 40,270 primary eye screenings across 227 schools, against an enrolled population of 59,150 students. This represents a screening coverage of 68%. The gender distribution among children screened was nearly balanced, with 20,390 boys (50.6%) and 19,880 girls (49.4%).

The project data also demonstrates a pathway that extends well beyond the initial screening. Out of the children screened, 1,950 were referred for secondary evaluations, 549 secondary evaluations were conducted at the Vision Foundation of India Community Eye Clinic (CEC), 425 children were prescribed spectacles out of 361 were provided and 4 squint surgeries were conducted. A further 31 children were identified with a colour vision deficiency. These figures indicate that the programme is successfully linking school-based identification with follow-up eye care.

An important analytical priority for the next reporting cycle is to strengthen cohort-level tracking, so that every child identified at school can be followed through referral, clinical assessment, spectacle dispensing and treatment completion.



Background & Rationale



Many children do not complain about poor vision, even when they are having difficulty seeing clearly. A child may sit closer to the board, avoid reading, copy slowly from the board, or lose interest in classroom activities, without anyone immediately realising that the underlying cause may be related to vision.

Schools provide a practical setting in which to identify such problems. By conducting screening in schools, the project is able to reach a large number of children and identify those who need a more detailed eye examination. The purpose of the project is therefore not only to screen children, but also to make sure that children who need further help are connected to the next stage of care.

About VFI- BMC Bal Drishti



The VFI - BMC Bal Drishti Project is working to make basic eye screening and follow-up eye care more accessible to children studying in BMC schools in Mumbai. The project team conducts eye screening in schools so that children can be checked during their regular school routine.

During screening, children found to have reduced vision, refractive errors or other suspected eye problems are identified for further assessment. These children are referred to the Community Eye Clinic, where a secondary evaluation is carried out. Based on the assessment, children who need spectacles are provided with spectacles, and children who require further treatment are referred for appropriate care, including surgery where medically required.

Completing 40,270 screenings is an important milestone for the project. It shows the reach of the programme and, more importantly, the number of children who have had an opportunity to have their vision checked.

Objective & Implementation Strategy



Implementation Strategy

The project follows a simple, structured process so that children can move from screening to treatment without losing the connection between the school and the eye-care service. Eye screening is conducted at the school, children with suspected problems are identified and referred to the Community Eye Clinic for secondary evaluation, and the required spectacles, medical care or surgical support is then provided. Follow-up is maintained with parents through home visits and school visits.

Objectives

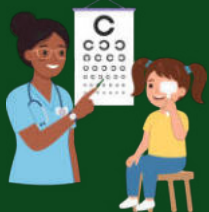
- To increase access to comprehensive, quality refractive error services for school-going children across all BMC schools.
- To enable the early detection of vision problems and ensure timely access to appropriate treatment, refraction services and prescribed spectacles.
- To provide a complete continuum of care from screening and diagnosis to treatment, spectacle provision, referral, surgery and post-treatment follow-up.
- To enhance awareness among children, parents, teachers and community stakeholders about eye health, early signs of vision problems and the importance of timely intervention.
- To ensure delivery and sustainability of quality refractive services.



Project Implementation Flow

The table below sets out how a child moves through the Bal Drishti pathway, from the first school-based screening to follow-up after treatment.

Phase	Activity	Responsible	Key Outcome
SCREENING	Eye screening is conducted in BMC schools.	Project Team	Vision data collected
SCREENING	Children with suspected vision problems are identified.	Project Team	Referral list prepared
REFERRAL	Children requiring further assessment are referred to the Community Eye Clinic.	Project Team	CEC appointment confirmed
DIAGNOSIS	Secondary eye evaluation is carried out at the clinic.	Community Eye Clinic	Treatment plan determined
TREATMENT	Children requiring spectacles are prescribed and provided spectacles at schools.	Community Eye Clinic	Spectacles dispensed
REFERRAL	Children requiring further medical care are referred accordingly.	Community Eye Clinic	Specialist care arranged
TREATMENT	Children who need surgery are supported through the required treatment pathway.	CEC, Partner Hospital and Project Team	Surgical care completed
FOLLOW-UP	Follow-up is taken from parents through home visits and school visits.	Project Team	Outcomes tracked & recorded



Project Overview

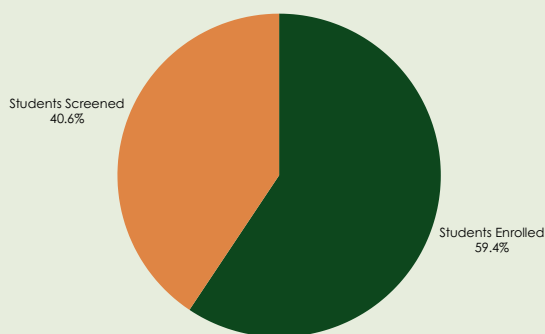
Key Performance Indicator Dashboard

Indicator	Result	Analytical Meaning
Schools visited	227	School network reached
Students enrolled	59,150	Potential population in visited schools
Primary screenings	40,270	Children receiving initial screening
Screening coverage	68.08%	Share of enrolled students screened
Boys screened	50.60%	Gender coverage
Girls screened	49.40%	Gender coverage
Secondary evaluations	549 (1.36%)	Children referred and reaching further assessment
CEC spectacles prescribed	425	Clinical prescription outcome
Spectacles provided	361	Recorded dispensing outcome
Surgeries conducted	4 (0.01%)	Recorded surgical intervention
Colour vision deficiency	31	Children identified with CVD

Key Findings & Analysis

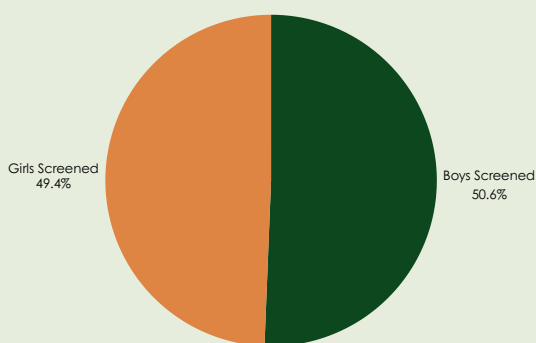
7.1 Screening Coverage

Against an enrolled population of 59,150 students across 227 schools, the project completed 40,270 primary screenings, a coverage rate of 68%. The resulting gap of 18,800 students represents the immediate opportunity for additional screening through repeat visits, absentee follow up or improved mobilisation, subject to verification of the MIS denominator.



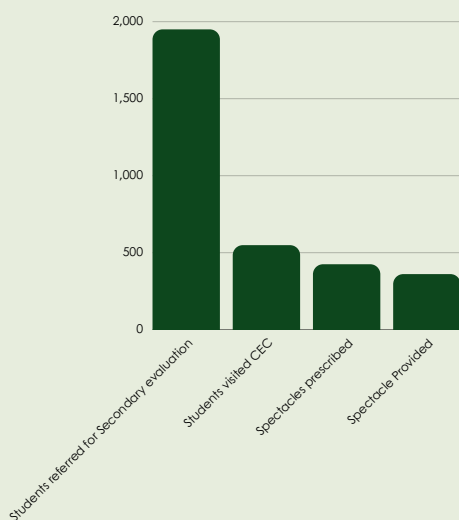
7.2 Gender-wise Coverage

Of the 40,270 students screened, 20,390 were boys and 19,880 were girls. The project will continue to monitor gender wise coverage while planning future screening activities, with the aim of ensuring that both boys and girls have equal opportunity to access screening and follow up services.



7.3 From Screening to Care: The Eye-Care Pathway

Screening identifies need, but a referral pathway connects it to care through the Community Eye Clinic. Of the 1950 children referred for secondary evaluation, 549 visited our community eye care centre. 425 were prescribed spectacles, and 361 received them, an overall conversion of 85% from identified need to spectacles delivered.





7.4 Role of the Community Eye Clinic

The Community Eye Clinic is a central part of the project, because school screening is only the first step and does not replace a detailed clinical evaluation. Children referred from schools receive further assessment so that the appropriate next step; spectacles, further medical attention, or another form of treatment can be decided. The clinic therefore acts as the link between the school and specialised eye-care services, a linkage that is particularly important for children who need spectacles or further treatment.

Key Learnings



Reaching 40,270 screenings is more than a numerical target; each one is a chance to find a child who may be struggling to see without knowing why. For some, the next step is simply a pair of spectacles; for others, screening leads to a secondary evaluation and diagnosis of a condition needing treatment. The value of the project lies in this complete pathway from identification to care, and this milestone gives the team a strong base to strengthen follow-up.

Reaching this number in seven months shows that schools are an effective setting for first level screening, but also that screening must be backed by a reliable referral system, since without follow-up, identified children may not get the care they need. Another key learning is the need for regular communication with parents and schools. Parents need to understand why secondary evaluation matters, while teachers can encourage children to use their spectacles and complete follow-up.

Another key learning has been that, redeploying teams to schools with stable attendance during festivals, as with Urdu-medium schools during Ganpati, keeps screening on track and avoids lost field days.

Conclusion & Future Direction



Future Direction

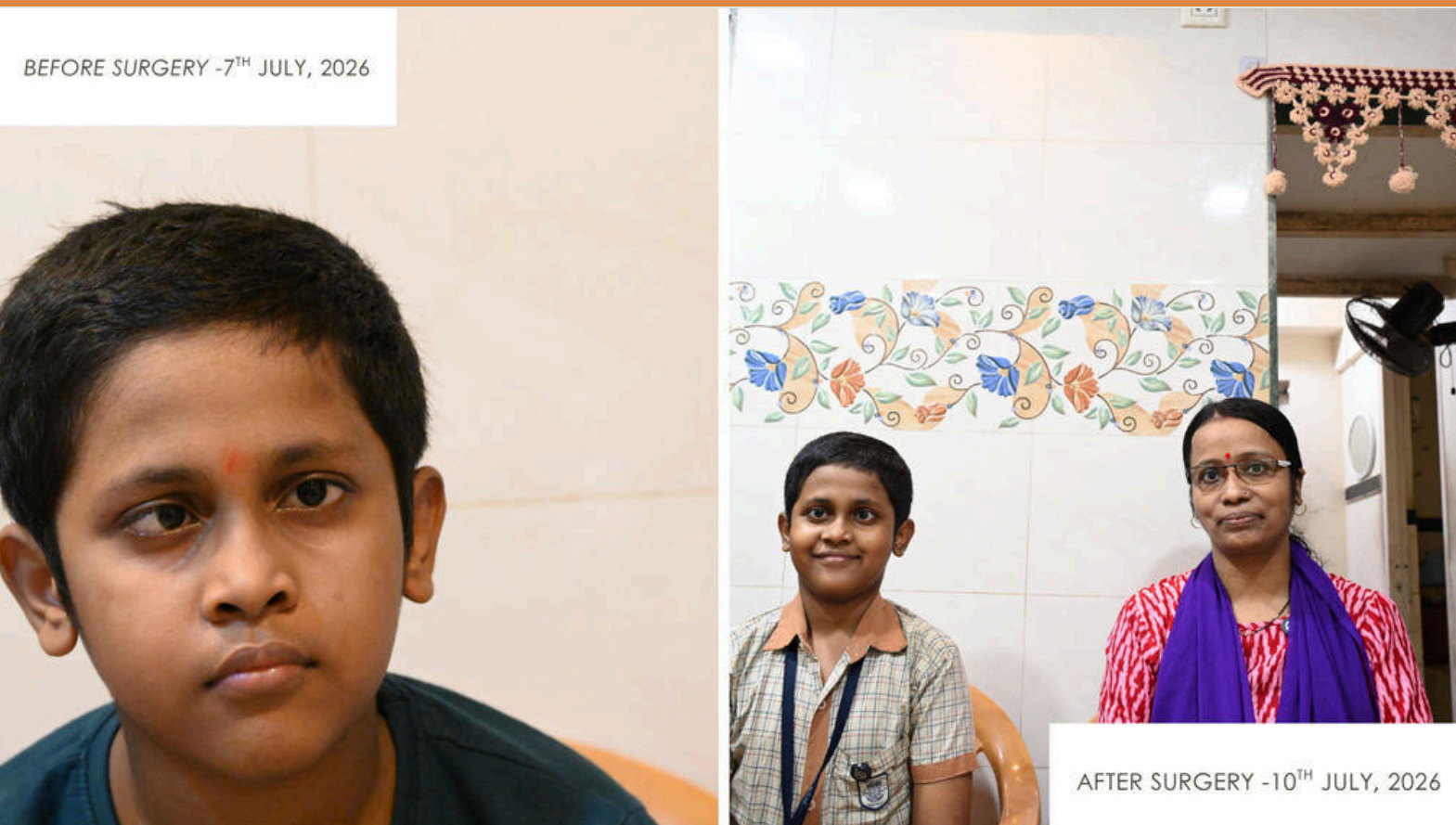
With the 40,270 screening milestone achieved, the next focus should be on strengthening the quality and continuity of care. The project can build on its school network and referral system to ensure that children identified with eye problems are followed until they receive the appropriate intervention. Future reporting can also provide a clearer picture of the project's impact by showing the number of children who were identified, referred, evaluated, provided spectacles, treated or operated upon — helping stakeholders understand not only the reach of the project but also the outcomes achieved for children.

Conclusion

Completing 40,270 eye screenings under the BMC-VFI Bal Drishti Project marks a key milestone, reaching 20,390 boys and 19,880 girls across BMC schools and taking an important step towards early detection of vision problems. Children needing further care are connected to the Community Eye Clinic for evaluation, spectacles, or referral for further treatment.

A reliable referral system, parents' participation, and teacher support in encouraging spectacle use matter as much as screening itself. The exercise also picked up 31 cases of colour blindness. While the condition cannot be corrected, early detection helps parents and teachers make simple classroom adjustments and guides the child's future choices in study and work.

The First Bench



Vedant Pravin Nerulkar, Class 4, Ganpatrao Kadam BMC School, Lower Parel, Mumbai. Despite sitting on the first bench, nine-year-old Vedant could not read the blackboard. He had developed a squint, a condition that meant constant strain, copied guesses, and classmates who noticed his eyes before they noticed him. Slowly, the boy in the best seat stopped using it, growing quieter each day. His mother saw the withdrawal first, then the lost confidence. She did not know where to turn.

A school vision screening supported by Vision Foundation of India identified Vedant's squint. He was referred to the VFI Community Eye Clinic, where the condition was corrected surgically, free of cost. Today, Vedant sits on the same first bench and reads what is written. He follows lessons as they are taught, answers when asked, and holds his own among classmates who once made him self-conscious. His mother has stood by him at every step.

"Thanks to the support of VFI, my son can now see clearly, learn without difficulty, and feel confident among his friends."

What changed for Vedant was not only his eyesight but how his school, his friends, and he himself would see the kind of student he truly was.

Thank you for your guidance and cooperation

We sincerely thank you for all your kind guidance in the implementation of comprehensive eye screening and treatment services, across all BMC schools. This decision enables systematic early detection of vision impairments and timely clinical intervention, directly contributing to improved learning outcomes and the prevention of avoidable childhood Visual Disability.



**SMT. ASHWINI
BHIDE, IAS**

MUNICIPAL COMMISSIONER
BMC
GOVERNMENT OF MAHARASHTRA



**SMT. PRACHI
JAMBHEKAR**

DEPUTY MUNICIPAL COMMISSIONER
(EDUCATION), BMC
GOVERNMENT OF MAHARASHTRA



**Shri Kailashchandra
M. Arya**

DEPUTY EDUCATION OFFICER
PP CELL BMC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
GOVERNMENT OF MAHARASHTRA

Your vision reflects a strong commitment to preventive public health, inclusive education, and evidence-based policy action. By strengthening eye health within the Ayushman Bharat School Health program, every child can see clearly, learn with confidence, and progress without avoidable visual barriers, an investment in both child wellbeing and long-term human capital development.

Thank you for your generous support!

Your kindness has helped protect and improve the eye health of school-going children, enabling early detection of vision problems and ensuring timely care when it matters most. Because of your belief in our mission, young learners can see clearly, learn confidently, and pursue their education without avoidable visual barriers. We are deeply grateful for your commitment to giving back and for investing in a brighter, clearer future for these children.



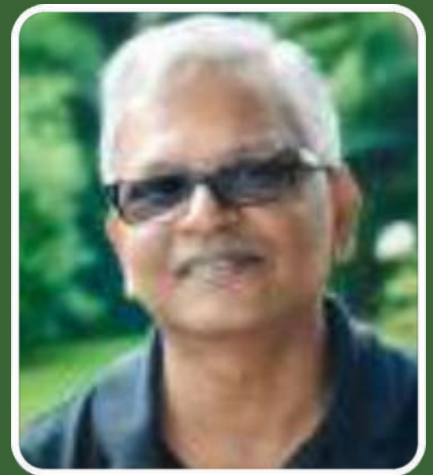
DR PRAKASH MODY

Thank you for your generosity, unconditional support, and constant encouragement. Your belief in this work continues to inspire us and strengthen our commitment to creating meaningful impact.



DR KULIN KOTHARI

Thank you for your generosity and for being our North Star, guiding us with clarity and purpose.



SHRI JAYENDRA SHAH

Thank you for your unconditional guidance and support. Your wisdom and encouragement have been invaluable throughout this journey



CONTACT US

Vision Foundation of India
Community Eye Clinic, Film Centre
Building, Ground Floor, 68, Tardeo Road,
Mumbai
+91-22-2354434662
www.visionfoundationofindia.org