

PRESS RELEASE - Embargoed until 00.01 on Friday 11 April 2014

**Public Health Foundation of India and
The Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust announce partnership
in India to combat visual loss and blindness due to diabetes**

- **Partnership between the Indian Institute of Public Health, Hyderabad (IIPH-H) and the International Centre for Eye Health, London School of Tropical Medicine**
- **National Diabetic Retinopathy Summit, to be organised from 12-14 April 2014 in Hyderabad**

Hyderabad April 11, 2014: The Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust in partnership with the Public Health Foundation of India and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine will be organising the ***National Diabetic Retinopathy Summit***, in Hyderabad from 12th -14th April 2014. The summit aims to develop an agreed national strategy for the prevention, detection and treatment of Diabetic Retinopathy (DR), a leading cause of avoidable blindness amongst diabetics in India. The Summit will further examine a landmark India centric situational analysis as the starting point for the development of a shared national strategy.

The South Asia Centre for Disability Inclusive Development & Research (SACDIR) at the Indian Institute of Public Health, Hyderabad (IIPH-H), a constituent unit of the Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI), was the hub for conducting a situational analysis and research. The Center will also oversee and implement the strategic partnership between PHFI and The Trust to develop various approaches to treat diabetic retinopathy across India.

A major finding from the situational analysis was the lack of attention given to the damaging impact diabetes can have on vision, with less than a third of diabetes physicians even having a simple vision chart in their clinics.

The study also highlighted a severe lack of public awareness about diabetes and the importance of regular eye tests. Half of the people in the study didn't know they had diabetes until they visited an eye clinic for problems with their vision. More than half the patients visiting ophthalmologists had been suffering from diabetes for over 10 years, with 15% living with the condition for over 20 years and therefore putting themselves at a high risk of sight loss.

Diabetic Retinopathy is the leading cause of blindness among working adults. Hence these findings highlight the substantial public health effect of diabetes and the need for effective screening and management of DR related risk factors.

Dr Astrid Bonfield, Chief Executive of The Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust, said, "The Trust is delighted to bring together some of the world's leading experts in eye health care and diabetes

and we are looking forward to supporting the agreed national strategy to come out of this summit. This gathering of minds is a huge step towards tackling an escalating cause of blindness and will ultimately save the sight of many millions of people across the Commonwealth”.

Dr GVS Murthy, Director of IIPH-H said, “Diabetic Retinopathy (DR) is a leading cause of visual impairment in India with 18% of diabetics suffering from DR. Awareness of DR in India is poor and 1/3rd of diabetics don’t know about it. Hence, DR is expected to be one of the leading public health challenges in India. This Summit brings together all stakeholders including the Indian Government, eye care professionals, international and national NGOs, academic researchers, civil society, patient groups and media representatives. They will deliberate on the findings from the first ever comprehensive situational analysis conducted in the mega cities in India and chart out an integrated action plan to mitigate the consequences of diabetes on the eye. The Public Health Foundation of India is honoured to be hosting this Summit of national importance”.

Sir Michael Hirst, President of the International Diabetes Federation said, "The International Diabetes Federation is very pleased to be associated with this excellent initiative by The Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust. Far too many people with diabetes lose their sight to diabetes-related eye disease in India as elsewhere, because there is no effective retinal screening or appropriate care and treatment available. Thanks to the work of the Trust, diabetic retinopathy is being given far more attention and remedial action. We look forward to a long and constructive partnership with organisations devoted to the saving of sight."

According to WHO estimates, diabetic retinopathy is responsible for 4% of the 45 million cases of blindness due to eye conditions and uncorrected refractive error throughout the world. However this is set to increase in the coming years. By 2030 India will have an estimated 80 million diabetics, the highest number for any country.

The three day summit will have discussions and workshops that will bring together leaders in eye health, diabetes and health policy in India and internationally. They will work together to develop ways of increasing public awareness of the condition, identify priorities for control and detail short and medium term support strategies. It will lead to the creation of a detailed national plan of action to combat diabetic retinopathy supported by all the actors involved.

Notes to editors

For more information or to request interviews with Dr GVS Murthy, please contact Public Health Foundation of India Press Office

- Mr Sivanageswara Rao, IIPH-Hyd(siva.nrao@iiphh.org / 9441213280)
- Ms. Gina Sharma (gina.sharma@phfi.org /9811887088)
- Mr. Rajiv Chhibber (rajiv.chhibber@phfi.org/9810426698)

For further information about The Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust, please contact

- Effie Blythe on 07792 705384 or effie.blythe@qejubileetrust.org

About The Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust

The Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust is a charitable foundation established in 2012 to mark and celebrate Her Majesty The Queen's 60-year contribution to the Commonwealth.

The Trust has received donations from governments, corporate partners, trusts, foundations, community groups and individuals from across the Commonwealth. Its mission is to enrich the lives of people from all backgrounds within the Commonwealth, and its programmes work in alliance towards eliminating avoidable blindness and to empower a new generation of young leaders.

With a five-year timeframe in which to deliver successful programmes, the Trust's aim is to leave a lasting legacy, owned by the whole Commonwealth, to honour Her Majesty The Queen.

For more information please visit www.jubileetribute.org.

About The Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust's Avoidable Blindness Programme

Eighty percent of all blindness is avoidable. Within the Commonwealth, there are an estimated 15 million people who are blind as a result of causes that can be prevented.

The Trust's Avoidable Blindness Programme aims to make significant progress towards ending avoidable blindness within the Commonwealth, by building on the work of the VISION 2020 global initiative and to help achieve the goals set by the World Health Organisation's Universal eye health: a global action plan 2014-2019.

The Programme will tackle three specific diseases and health issues linked to avoidable blindness – blinding trachoma, diabetic retinopathy and retinopathy of prematurity. An overarching Initiative developing fellowships, research and technology will additionally strengthen and make available high quality eye health care for all those who need it within the Commonwealth.

About the Public Health Foundation of India

The Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI) is working towards building a healthier India. It is helping to address the limited institutional and systems capacity in India by strengthening education and training, advancing research and technology and facilitating policy and practice in the area of Public Health. PHFI is headquartered in New Delhi with national presence through its constituent units of four regional Indian Institutes of Public Health (IIPH) and Centres of Applied Research in core public health themes. The Foundation, established in 2006 as a public private initiative, is governed by an independent board comprising of senior government officials, eminent Indian and International academic and leaders, civil society representatives and corporate leaders. For more information visit www.phfi.org