The National Programme for Control of Blindness (NPCB) was launched in the year 1976 with the goal of reducing the prevalence of blindness to 0.3% by 2020. Rapid Survey on Avoidable Blindness conducted under NPCB during 2006-07 showed reduction in the prevalence of blindness from 1.1% (2001-02) to 1% (2006-07). These statistics show that we have to conjointly work towards achieving the targets for 2020.

I am informed that a two-day workshop for enhancing eye care in underserved districts under the caption – “District Planning 2.0” was conducted on the 31st of October, and 1st of November, 2014 at Madurai, Tamil Nadu as part of the collaborative effort of Lions Aravind Institute of Community Ophthalmology (LAICO) and Centre for Innovations in Public Systems (CIPS), Hyderabad. I am glad that you had nominated a team from your State to participate in the workshop. This meeting was well attended by Government representatives from the States of Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha and Rajasthan. Other stakeholders, such as the funding NGOs, National eye NGOs and resource persons from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India also participated, signaling the strong commitment to enhance eye care in the underserved districts in these States as a pilot initiative.

As you are aware, the exercise of micro level district planning starts by the end of every financial year, and the district plans are incorporated in the PIPs before their submission to this Ministry. It is imperative that the micro planning exercise at the district level is comprehensive. It should be undertaken involving all the stakeholders including local NGOs and national NGOs and experts, from the Government and the private sector and other eminent persons from the field of eye care. It would be a good idea to undertake a situation assessment of certain identified pilot districts for understanding the gaps, opportunities and challenges so as to develop annual and long term plans for the districts and their incorporation in the PIPs of the State.
I would, therefore, urge you to identify a nodal officer for the district planning process for the National Programme for control of Blindness and issue instructions to involve all stakeholders for getting inputs into the district planning process.

Yours sincerely,

(Lov Verma)

To

Health Secretaries (Assam, Bihar, Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh).