

2024 Annual Report

**WCO: The Year
in Review**



WORLD COUNCIL
OF OPTOMETRY

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WCO Board of Directors



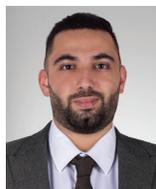
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India



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Mr. Ameer Abou Adela
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African Geographic Representative
South Africa



Dr. Curtis Ono
AOA, In-Kind Association Representative
USA



the World Health Organization has been working to address the most prevalent causes of visual impairment. WHO SPECS 2030 was launched early this year and WCO was one of the 31 inaugural members.”

Letter from the President



Dear WCO members – past, current and future - and other supporters of our vision and mission, I am writing this as a way to reminisce about all of the work the World Council of Optometry undertook in 2024. It is exciting to look back and reflect on the many successes for WCO and opportunities that we each have to represent optometry along with highlighting the many ways that optometry works to help improve access to quality eyecare for all.

I want to highlight just a few of our many activities that occurred in 2024, of which we are very proud. We know that the World Health Organization has been working to address the most prevalent causes of visual impairment. WHO

SPECS 2030 was launched early this year and WCO was one of the 31 inaugural members. We will continue to work within the diverse group to identify ways to reduce the magnitude of the problem.

WCO is also very proud of several documents that have been developed over the year. First, we completed the survey of our members and with the guidance of Prof. Yazan Gammoh and Dr. Priya Morjaria, published some of the results: *Global Survey of Optometry: Defining Variations of Practice, Regulation and Human Resources Between Countries*. Clin Optom (Auckl). 2024 Aug 26;16:211-220. Second, the WCO Education Committee released the WCO Competency Framework for Optometry which provides guidance for curriculums of optometric programs globally. This document was initiated after WHO published an Eyecare Competency Framework which focuses on the recognition of optometry as a primary eyecare provider. Future efforts are underway to add to the core pillars identified in the WCO framework.

We are also very proud to see continued success of our OPTOMETRY PROGRAM IN ADVOCACY AND LEADERSHIP (OPAL). In addition to an excellent cohort of bright and active optometrists admitted, we are very appreciative of the volunteers to help mentor future optometric leaders in advocacy. We appreciate the continued support of OGS that allows us to continue to strive for an excellent program.

We also are so excited that the American Optometric Association will be a partner for the WCO5 in June 2025 in Minneapolis. We hope to see everyone there continue to network and build optometry to a stronger profession.

These are only a few of the highlights for 2024. I want to thank our staff, our Board of Directors, and our volunteers, along with others that have worked with WCO now and in the future.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sandra Block". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Prof. Sandra Block

President, World Council of Optometry

Program Highlights

The World Council of Optometry introduced a revolutionary resource aimed at harmonizing the optometry profession and enhancing optometric education globally: the WCO Competency Framework for Optometry. Developed with a vision to define optometry in terms of essential competencies required to engage effectively in the international eye care agenda, this framework marks a significant milestone in advancing eye health worldwide.

With the publication of the World Report on Vision and the Lancet Global Commission on Eye Health, there is a range of challenges that are facing eye care in the future.

As optometrists, we need to be prepared to be able to participate in multiple roles within these health systems, not just in primary care roles, but potentially in secondary care settings, as well as community settings.

We need to work with others to address the increase in demand for the delivery of care. Future eye care is going to need all practitioners who work in eye care to work

at the maximum capacity and skill. So, the competencies that we put in the framework provide this opportunity for optometry in many countries to argue for a broader scope of practice and wider role in eye care, with the emphasis on the practitioner to graduate and pursue continued drive to stay abreast of the best ways to provide quality eye care to their patients.

This framework demonstrates a minimum scope of practice, and by clarifying this to the policy makers and legislators, it will enable the profession to be engaged in this discussion around who can really be called an optometrist and of course, their scope of practice. This will help us to build the pathway to legislation to protect the public, which is our main aim. And for educators themselves, they can use this framework to identify competency gaps in their education outcomes. Also, it will allow them to design a bridging program to grow the skills and competencies of existing optometrists.

“ECOO very much welcomes the WCO’s new Competency Framework document. As an accreditation agency, it is important that ECOO’s syllabus and practical competencies for the European Diploma in Optometry remain current and that they sit comfortably within important policy documents that reflect the scope and status of optometry worldwide. For these reasons, it is entirely appropriate for ECOO to be consulting on possible changes to the EDO syllabus & practical competencies which, if passed, will bring the EDO into line with the new WCO Competency Framework”.

Prof. Brendan Barrett, Co-Chair of the European Council of Optometry and Optics European Qualifications Board (EQB)

The WCO Competency Framework for Optometry



Engage effectively in the
International Eye Care Agenda



With the Future
Challenges
Facing Eye Care
**ODs Need
To Be
Prepared**



All Practitioners in Eye
Care Need to Work at
**Maximum Capacity
and Skill**



A Minimum Scope of
Practice Clarifies
**Who Can Be Called
an Optometrist**



Protecting the Public
**While Building
the Pathway to
Legislation**



Through a Bridging Program
**Advancing Skills
and Competencies
of Optometrists**

Optometry Program in Advocacy and Leadership (OPAL)

The World Council of Optometry Looking Towards the Future: Optometry Program in Advocacy and Leadership (OPAL) is an annual 12-week online course conducted in English **aimed at enabling future eye health leaders to use advocacy, public health, and leadership strategies to effect change at the policy and practice levels and lead the profession forward within the health care sector while supporting WCO's Mission, Vision and Strategic Plan.**

2024 marks the fourth year WCO has offered the OPAL program in its current form. The course was held from August 12 to November 04, 2024. Over 100 applications from 37 countries across the six WCO geographic regions (Africa, Asia Pacific, Eastern Mediterranean, Europe, Latin America and North America) were screened and reviewed by the OPAL Selection Committee.

A total of 34 qualified candidates from 25 countries across the six regions were chosen to participate in OPAL 2024.

OPAL Gems: Celebrating Our Participants' Brilliance

Let us follow the journey of some of our successful graduates from OPAL 2024 and their capstone projects:

Raju Kaiti from Nepal

Before OPAL: *"Given the growing phase of optometry in Nepal and the pressing need for robust advocacy, I hope to gain practical skills in advocacy and leadership to drive meaningful changes in healthcare policies and practices. I aim to address the centralization of eye health services and the lack of optometric services in rural villages."*

"In Nepal, where optometric services are scarce, especially in rural areas, many people suffer from preventable vision impairments. This drives my passion to lead and advocate for comprehensive eye care services across the country."

After OPAL:

Raju's OPAL capstone project topic was about improved access for preventative vision care in children.

The Little Optometrist Program was conducted with the help of Thanaka Nepal and as part of his OPAL capstone project and social work focused on vision screening for children in Shree Bhadrakali Basic School, located at Mandandeupur municipality, Nepal which is an area with limited road facilities, poor economic conditions and health facilities.

With assistance from optometry students from Nepal Eye hospital, Raju's team performed various eye examinations such as visual acuity assessment, objective refraction, cycloplegic retinoscopy, subjective refraction, anterior segments, color vision assessment, etc., and was able to screen 178 children. Those who need further evaluation were referred to Nepal Eye Hospital.

With strong community participation and engagement from students, teachers and parents alike, the program helped promote the importance of vision care and ensuring early detection and intervention for cases of refractive errors, amblyopic, strabismic, and anterior segment problems.



Memoona Arshad from Pakistan

Before OPAL: *“I hope to gain skills in leadership, policy influence, and public health promotion. In the future, I plan to use this knowledge to drive initiatives that improve eye care accessibility and quality, and to play an active role in shaping policies that benefit the optometry field and patient care. I would like to become a leader and advocate in optometry and vision care to help address the significant unmet needs in Pakistan.*”

After OPAL: Memoona’s OPAL capstone project was about myopia management and control in Pakistan. Using the knowledge and skills she learned from the course, she was able to become the Executive & Scientific Committee Head who helped the University of Faisalabad – Department of Optometry and Ophthalmology in organizing their 3rd International Myopia Conference 2025.

One of the key highlights in that event was the “An Educator’s Guide to Myopia Management” workshop that Memoona facilitated. This was aimed at equipping optometry educators with essential tools to enhance myopia care education. According to Memoona, “This is just the beginning, and I look forward to furthering collaborative efforts to strengthen myopia management education and clinical practice in Pakistan.”

Raju and Memoona’s journeys are great examples of how WCO’s Advocacy and Leadership Program (OPAL) has helped in equipping optometrists with the necessary skills, strategies and knowledge in advocacy, leadership, and public health. WCO is excited for the bright and promising future of our OPAL graduates.

To learn more about OPAL,
please visit the WCO website.
worldcouncilofoptometry.info



WCO is grateful to the OPAL Facilitators, Mentors, and Optometry Giving Sight (OGS) for their continued support of OPAL to help train optometric leaders to facilitate the development of optometry across the globe.

Did you know? OPAL 2024 graduates committed an average of 3 to 5 hours per week to fully participate in the program and developed their own capstone projects as part of the course requirement.



Grants Funded by the World Optometry Foundation

Through WCO's fundraising arm, the World Optometry Foundation, WCO continues to invest in our advocates and members, resulting in long-term sustainable results which improve eye care delivery.



Rana Diab of the Vision Care Association was selected for her project Enhancing Vision Health Access for Syrian Refugee School Children in Beqaa, Lebanon. This project focused on providing eye health care and education for 600 children from April – May 2024. During an uncertain time for many, we celebrate the volunteers and families that prioritized their eye health.



Jerry Weboya of Optometrists Association of Uganda completed his project, Vision for All - Projects in Underserved Communities, implemented by GAF Eye Health Foundation. The roles of an optometrist and eye health education were discussed via radio talk show, as well as exams and educational materials distributed at a community center and school.



Membership

Membership Category	Total Number of Members in 2023	Total Number of Members in 2024	% Increase
Affiliate	35	45	29%
Corporate	7	10	43%
Country	43	48	12%
Individual	200	227	14%
Total	285	330	16%



Over the course of 2024, WCO has had the pleasure of welcoming 45 new members to our organization. **This is a staggering 16% increase from 2023.**

South African Optometric Association Centennial Celebration Conference

To commemorate the 100-year anniversary of the South African Optometric Association (SAOA), the SAOA held its Centennial Conference at Emperors Palace in July. Almost eight hundred delegates attended the Conference which included optometrists, dispensing opticians, students, and representatives from industry. The theme of the event embraced the spirit of celebrating the SAOA's 100-year anniversary underpinned by the slogan 'From A tradition of Excellence, the Force of the Future'.

Regulation of the Optometric Profession in Poland

After 25 years of advocacy, optometry is becoming a regulated medical profession in Poland, officially integrating into the National Healthcare System. The new Law on Certain Medical Professions, effective March 2024, outlines regulations for optometry, with further implementing regulations still to be published. This landmark legislation will enhance service quality, protect the professional title of optometrists, and support the future development of the field in Poland.

Read more at <https://ecoo.info/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/1.-Regulation-in-Poland.pdf>.



If you are interested in learning more about how to become a WCO member, please scan the QR code

Partnerships

Myopia Management in Partnership with CooperVision

In the fourth year of its partnership with CooperVision, the World Council of Optometry (WCO) celebrated significant milestones, including the first Latin American Myopia virtual event in February. “Myopia Management: From Theory to Practice,” was organized in collaboration with several local organizations to promote myopia management practices.

Additionally, the new WCO CooperVision Myopia Management Navigator was released. The 3 sections of the Navigator focus on mitigation, measurement, and management and offers a user-friendly online platform, providing a simple and accessible resource for clinicians, parents, and allied professionals to navigate their own educational path through myopia management. You can view the Navigator at myopianavigator.info.

Dry Eye Disease in partnership with Alcon

In 2024, the partnership between WCO and Alcon focused on maximizing the utility of the WCO-Alcon Dry Eye Wheel. The latest version offers comprehensive, evidence-based knowledge applicable across various eye care settings.

Our partnership also prioritized the translation of the Dry Eye Wheel into Spanish. With 41% of individuals in Mexico and 13% in Brazil experiencing dry eye symptoms, there is a pressing need for continued education and resources tailored to Latin American countries. Additionally, we have launched new online resources to assist eye care professionals in utilizing the Dry Eye Wheel, a practical tool designed for the diagnosis and treatment of dry eye disease. The WCO-ALCON Dry Eye Wheel is available to interact with at dryeye.worldcouncilofoptometry.info.

Presbyopia and the Aging Eye in partnership with EssilorLuxottica

The prevalence of presbyopia is projected to affect over 4 billion people by 2050. The presbyopia standard of care initiative, launched in partnership with EssilorLuxottica, emphasizes the importance of regular eye exams, public education, and integrating comprehensive eye care services with health systems to improve vision quality and overall quality of life for the aging population. The presbyopia standard of care addresses the growing need for effective, comprehensive eye care solutions to restore clear vision and improve quality of life for those experiencing age-related vision changes. The standard of care can be viewed at <https://presbyopia.worldcouncilofoptometry.info/standardofcare/> in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, and Spanish.

WCO and EssilorLuxottica released a series of live sessions, titled ‘Presbyopia and Aging Eye’, providing comprehensive guidelines for eye care practitioners. The series on demand here: <https://presbyopia.worldcouncilofoptometry.info/events-webinars/>.

WCO Board in Action

The WCO Board members have been very busy promoting our work and supporting members of WCO around the globe. Here are a few of the things they've done:



WCO President-Elect **Dr. Cindy Tromans**, Public Health Committee Chair **Dr. Priya Morjaria**, and Geographic Representative for the Eastern Mediterranean **Ameer Abou Adela** attended the Saudi Society of Optometry (SSO) conference from 14-16 November 2024 in Riyadh as event speakers.



WCO President-Elect **Dr. Cindy Tromans** and WCO Education Committee Chair **Prof. Yazan Gammoh** spoke at the Muscat International Ophthalmology Conference, co-organized by the Eastern Mediterranean Council of Optometry (EMCO) and Oman Optometry Club, November 28-30, 2024. This conference saw ophthalmology and optometry showcased from a regional perspective with an international approach.



WCO President-Elect **Dr. Cindy Tromans** represented WCO at the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) Board Meeting held alongside the 2030 IN SIGHT LIVE global conference event. WCO President **Prof. Sandra Block** also attended IAPB's 2030 In Sight meeting. This initiative seeks to unite stakeholders across the eye health sector with the goal to end avoidable sight loss by 2030.



The University of Lahore Department of Optometry and Vision Sciences (DOVS) hosted a significant session on optometry at the 2nd ICAAHS-24, led by **Dr. Qazi Muhammad Omaid**, featuring national and international experts discussing advancements in the field. Keynote speaker **Prof. Sandra Block** addressed global challenges and innovations in optometry, while other speakers covered topics like AI's role in eye health and the impact of screen time on children.

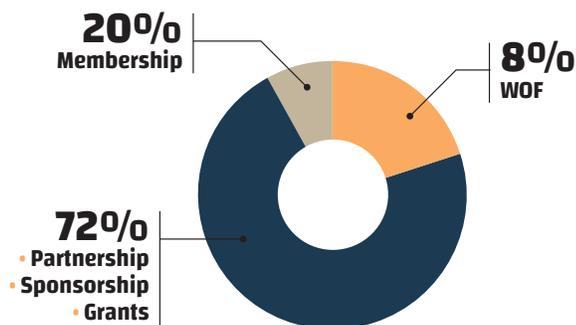


WCO President **Prof. Sandra Block** visited Brazil, igniting enthusiasm through her presentations at CNC in Brasília and ExpoFecomércio in Goiânia. Despite the evolving landscape of optometry in Brazil, challenges remain, particularly the reliance on ophthalmologists and the recent changes in education policy that affect optometry programs. Prof. Block's insights emphasized the need for collaboration between optometrists and ophthalmologists to enhance patient care.

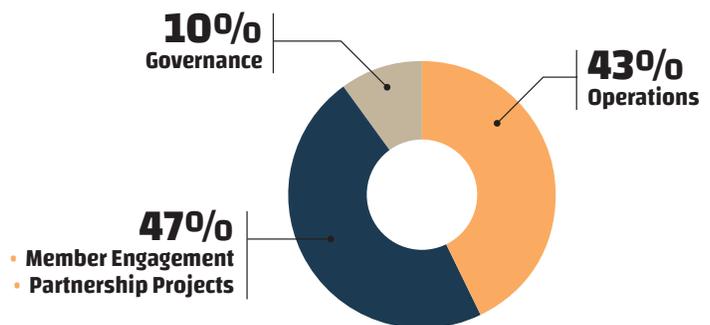
WCO Financial Snapshot

2024 was a landmark year for WCO's growth in membership. We experienced great support for our many initiatives. As membership rises, so does the ability to act on behalf of members. **Partnerships, sponsorships, and grants make up a majority of income which has helped WCO increase our efforts to add resources, diversify revenue, engage more members, and grow our programs.**

Income



Expenditures



Sponsorship & Support

As we strive to unite and strengthen the voice of optometry across the globe, your support is more crucial than ever. **By contributing to our vision and mission, you help us ensure that we can advocate for the profession and its future, fund vital projects, and expand access to eye care for communities.**

Join us in this important mission – your generosity will help secure a brighter future for optometry and the countless lives we touch. Together we can uplift optometry and make a lasting difference. **Donate to the World Optometry Foundation by scanning the QR code:**



Thank you to our 2024 sponsors and supporters

who allow the World Council of Optometry to continue to affect change and support our vision of accessible eye health and vision care for everyone.



EssilorLuxottica



Alcon



Upcoming Events

• 6th World Congress of Optometry: Riyadh, Saudi Arabia 2026

WCO6 will take place in conjunction with the Saudi Society of Optometry (SSO) at their annual meeting in November 2026 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. **Stay tuned for more information!**

• World Council of Optometry Centennial Celebration, 2027

WCO100 2027 marks the centennial celebration of WCO. More information to come.

Our Vision: Accessible eye health
and vision care for everyone.

Our Mission: We advance and
promote optometry, global eye health
and vision care through collaboration,
education, and advocacy.

In Remembrance

In remembrance of the great optometric leaders
who left us in 2024, with special dedication to our
colleague and friend, Mr. Manfred Müller.





WORLD COUNCIL OF OPTOMETRY

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