**STATUS OF HEARING LOSS STATISTICS**

Deafness refers to the complete loss of hearing in one or both ears. Hearing loss refers to both complete and partial loss of the ability to hear. Disabling hearing loss refers to hearing loss greater than 40 decibels (dB) in the better hearing ear in adults and a hearing loss greater than 30 dB in the better hearing ear in children.

360 million persons have disabling (moderate or worse) hearing impairment - increased from 278 million in 2005, 328 million of these are adults (183 million males and 145 million females), and 32 million of these are children. Approximately one-third of people over 65 years of age are affected by disabling hearing loss, and more than 80% of them are living in low & middle income countries.

Appropriate control measures can avoid 50% of hearing impairment through prevention, early detection and referral for medical or surgical management; and strengthening of the back-up of comprehensive ear health care and rehabilitation services.

60% of childhood hearing loss is preventable through appropriate treatment of ear infections /meningitis and vaccination for rubella, mumps and measles; avoiding and reducing the complication of birth, prematurity and low birth-weight; prevention of trauma, foreign bodies, wax, and exposure to excessive noise; creating awareness on excessive usage of ototoxic medication and having regulations accordingly.

Raising awareness and improving access to services at the primary level can help to reduce the prevalence and adverse impact of hearing loss.

People with hearing loss can benefit from Hearing aids; Cochlear implants and other assistive devices; Captioning and sign language; and other forms of educational and social support.

Consequences of hearing loss could impact on delayed language development; academic under achievement; social isolation; higher risk of getting injuries, and Increased poverty.

The **VISION** of WHO Programme for prevention of hearing loss is having a world in which no person experiences hearing loss due to preventable causes, and those with unavoidable hearing loss can achieve their full potential through habilitation/rehabilitation, education and empowerment.

WHO emphasizes and promotes primary ear and hearing health within the framework of primary health care systems, strengthening primary, secondary and tertiary ear and hearing health care referral complex and universal access to inclusive comprehensive ear and hearing health care services.

Some of the strategies for prevention and provision of inclusive ear health care could be like strengthening ofmaternal and child healthcare programmes including immunization & organizations of people with hearing loss; training of relevant professionals /cadres of team of otology and audiology; infant and school-based hearing screening programmes in place; having regulations and monitoring mechanism for the un-necessary usage of ototoxic medicines and environmental noise; raising awareness of masses on hearing care and reducing societal stigma; and making universally accessible the availability of hearing devices and communication therapies.

At national level, a functional national steering committee in place in the ministry of health may be there with a mandatory role and responsibility for the development and implementation of long term integrated national action plan on ear and hearing health care as part of general health system in line with WHO framework for health system strengthening. Operational and clinical research could be part and parcel of the national plan and used for evidence based planning, and there should be an effective national health management and information system in place.