

September 2014

## IAPB Position Statement



International Agency for the  
Prevention of Blindness

### IAPB Position Paper on Recycled Spectacles



The purpose of IAPB position statement documents is to advise IAPB member organisations and other stakeholders of positions adopted by IAPB, in consideration of advice from leading experts, in issues affecting universal eye health.

By IAPB Refractive Error Work Group

#### **Position statement:**

Each year, Eye Care Non-Governmental Organisations and Institutions are inundated with offers of recycled and used spectacles for the developing world. IAPB recognises the good intentions behind these donations, but advises that its members and other parties engaged in promoting eye health should no longer accept second-hand spectacles for the following reasons:

#### **Reasons**

##### **Using recycled spectacles is not cost-effective**

For the donating country:

- The cost of supplying recycled spectacles is high due to collection, transport, cleaning, sorting and storage costs. This means that in real terms they cost far more than brand new ready-made spectacles as well as prescription spectacles made in a local facility.
- Because recycled spectacles are second-hand, they may not last as long as new spectacles. Replacing them would be costly to the recipient, both in financial terms and in terms of the time it would take them to reach the nearest eye-care facility. Affordable, high-quality modern spectacles are readily available and are robust.

For the receiving country:

- There is a high cost of clearance through customs, transporting, storage, measuring and labelling powers, or knocking out the lenses so that just the frames can be reused.
- There is an expectation that donated spectacles should be given out free, but the additional cost of management and distribution has to be taken into account.
- Bulk purchase of spectacles, or the frames and lenses needed to make up spectacles, is also possible through established outlets in Africa and Asia, which brings down the price.

**Everyone, regardless of their circumstances, has a right to clear, comfortable vision**

- Spectacle prescriptions are usually quite complex (consisting of spherical & cylindrical powers and axis & lens centration for each eye), making it very difficult to match the prescription of a donated pair of spectacles to a patient's prescription. If we cannot find a patient with exactly the same prescription then the spectacles cannot be used.
- Recycled spectacles are often damaged or scratched, which makes them inappropriate for further use.

**Everyone has a right to have spectacles that look attractive and fit comfortably**

- People all over the world want to look attractive. People with refractive errors, including children, often reject second-hand spectacles because they find them cosmetically unacceptable as they can look old-fashioned or out-of-date, or spectacles designed for males are being offered to females.
- Because second-hand spectacles were prescribed for a particular individual, the frames can often be uncomfortable for another user simply because they don't fit properly, even after adjustment.

## **Recycled spectacles can cause an environmental problem**

- Often massive quantities of recycled spectacles are collected only to be dumped as unusable, inappropriate stock - thus causing a major environmental problem in the recipient's country.

## **Local facilities are being supported to provide appropriate low cost high quality eye care**

- IAPB believes that low cost high quality eye care should be available to all. There are Optical Workshops and Public Health Eye Care facilities in many countries providing high quality low cost modern spectacles and other eye health services. The Refractive Error Work Group supports the training of a skilled workforce via its membership who are able to accurately prescribe, and reliably fit spectacles.



Pair of modern quality brand new Ready Made Spectacles - Price US \$ 2.20



Pair of modern quality brand new Spectacle Frames - Price US \$ 1.50