

# The Educator



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## TRANSITION to Adult Life



A Publication of



The International Council for Education of  
People with Visual Impairment

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## **Our International Partners**



## Message from The President



ICEVI is the major global organisation that acts in matters pertaining to education of children and young people with blindness, low vision, deafblindness, and visual impairment with additional disabilities. ICEVI's Mission is to promote access to inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all people with visual impairment. At the global level and within its seven world regions, ICEVI works closely with the World Blind Union, the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness, Deafblind International, United Nations agencies, international partner organizations, parent and disability organizations, and government and non-government service providers for children with disabilities.

The ICEVI Executive Committee (EXCO) held a strategic planning meeting in early 2017 and set a bold agenda of priority goals and activities for the 2017-2020 quadrennium. The strategic plan emphasizes connecting and supporting members, partners and stakeholders; accelerating knowledge sharing and innovation; providing technical expertise in the field of education of children and young children with visual impairment; and promoting and supporting governments and education stakeholders in the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The building and strengthening of global partnerships is essential in achieving growth in education completion rates for girls and boys with visual impairment, from early childhood and preschool levels to higher education. The International Disability Development Consortium (IDDC) highlighted the positive impact of disability-inclusive education on the social, academic, health and economic outcomes of children with disabilities, their parents and communities, and national governments. However, UNICEF has recently reported that 25 million children of school age (6-15 years old) are not in school due to violence and conflict in warzones across 22 countries. This group represents 22% of all children aged 6-15 years, and includes a disproportionate number

on children with disabilities. The situation is further exacerbated by the decline in global and national funding for education and humanitarian aid for education, as reported in IDDC's #CostingEquity report that was launched in late 2016 - see

<https://iddccconsortium.net>

On a positive note, one of the privileges of holding the office of ICEVI President is the opportunity it presents to work with education leaders, professionals and parents who are passionate about the education rights of children with disabilities, and who generously contribute their knowledge and expertise to achieving ICEVI's Mission and priority goals. To gain an understanding of the achievements of this amazing group of people, I refer you to the "ICEVI at a Glance" section of this volume.

The position of ICEVI President includes active involvement with the ICEVI expert Committees that are addressing the strategic areas of governance, communication, publications, mathematics, technology, higher education and employment, and teacher training. The Teacher Training Expert Committee, under the leadership of Prof. Kay Ferrell, has developed an innovative Start-Up Teacher Training Curriculum to support education enrolment of children with visual impairment in countries that do not yet educate children with disabilities, or who do so without a supporting system of teacher training. Preparations are underway to present the Curriculum to UNICEF for piloting by UNICEF Field Officers in developing countries. Once completed, the teacher training curriculum will be available in HTML format on the ICEVI website for download and delivery via mobile phone.

This is a busy and exciting time for ICEVI, reinforcing and building on our commitment to achieving equitable, quality educational outcomes for current and future generations of children and young people with visual impairment. I look forward to updating you on our strategic goals and activities in future publications.



**Frances Gentle**  
President, ICEVI

## Message from The Editor



Dear colleagues and friends,

From the time an infant with a disability is born his/her parents are immediately concerned about the adult life their child will have. The services that we provide to infants and children are only as good as the life outcomes that they promote. Will they have meaningful social relationships? Will they have opportunities to make meaningful contributions? Will they have enjoyable leisure times? Will they become as independent as possible?

In this issue of the educator you will read many inspiring stories from family members and professionals who have made very creative strides in assuring that young adults who are visually impaired, many with multiple disabilities and deafblindness have opportunities to have happy and satisfying adult lives. In reading them I am sure that you will be struck by the deep respect for the individual.

Looking ahead to the next issue, we are hoping to hear from many of you about the work that you are doing to promote the inclusion of children and adults who are blind, visually impaired and deafblind. In this issue want to broaden the notion that inclusion only refers to schools but that it is really about the whole life of a person. The theme will be ***Inclusion in home, school and communities***.

As always, I am inspired, as are all who read this publication by the creativity and passion for improving the lives of individuals and moving society's acceptance and support for people with disabilities.

Enjoy!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marianne Riggio".

**Marianne Riggio**  
Editor

# ICEVI at a Glance

## Strategy Review of ICEVI

The ICEVI Executive Committee (EXCO) conducted its 2017-2020 Strategic Planning meeting in Pretoria South Africa in February 2017 in conjunction with the annual EXCO meeting. Members reviewed ICEVI's 2012-16 strategic goals and achievements in the context of current international perspectives and approaches to education of children with visual impairment, and established the following strategic goals for 2017-20.

**Strategic Goal 1:** Promoting access to quality education for people with visual impairment including those with blindness, partial sight, deafblindness and additional disabilities.

The activities that will be taken up to realise this goal are as follows:

1. Developing Model curriculum for teacher training
2. Development of Country Assessment Tools for national education of children with visual impairment
3. Documentation of good practices
4. Promoting the use of Technology
5. Upgrading ICEVI Website for better dissemination of information
6. Translation of ICEVI Documents into Regional Languages
7. Bringing out ICEVI Publications

**Strategic Goal 2:** Influencing governments' and relevant stakeholders' implementation of the SDGs and UNCRPD in the area of education of people with visual impairment

The following measures will be undertaken to achieve Goal 2:

1. Preparing an inventory of existing ICEVI resources
2. Organising Country champion capacity building programmes
3. Exploring the possibility of recruiting a person for advocacy work

**Strategic Goal 3:** Improving networking, information sharing and collaboration at national, regional and global levels.

*This goal will be achieved by undertaking the following activities:*

1. Developing software for the mapping of services of Members, including regional location and service recipients
2. Development and implementation of communication strategy
3. Representation of ICEVI at UN meetings addressing education of children with disabilities

A follow-up matrix to monitor the progress of ICEVI 2017 activities towards achieving the three strategic goals has also been prepared and there will be more updates posted on ICEVI website [www.icevi.org](http://www.icevi.org) at regular intervals.

## **ICEVI Regional Reports**

Following are the key highlights of the activities carried out in ICEVI regions from January to June 2017 and some of the forthcoming activities are also mentioned in the reports.

### ***Africa***

- ICEVI Africa started working with eKitabu, a company that organizes the National Digital Essay Competition in Kenya since 2017 to include learners with visual impairments in their competitions as they were not included in the past. With the involvement of ICEVI Africa, the competition was extended to students with visual impairments who submitted 60 essays in Braille. This is considered as a step towards inclusion of students with visual impairment in mainstream activities.
- A series of discussions are on-going regarding a technology initiative for Africa. The discussions involve representatives from ICEVI Global, ICEVI Africa and the DAISY Consortium as well as a couple of other interested parties. ICEVI Africa is represented in the discussions by the Chair and Vice Chair. A draft concept note has been prepared and possible sources of funding are being explored.
- Engagement with the African Union has not started yet. The Chair is however a trainer of the BRIDGE CRPD-SDG section. As Education is one of the strong pillars in the training, the 31 self-advocates who are part of this initiative would hopefully contribute significantly to country levels influencing in education for all including learners with visual impairment.
- Negotiations for partnership with AFUB were completed in the first half of 2017 and a Memorandum of Understanding has been developed. A Joint African Marrakesh Treaty Ratification Campaign Strategy has also been developed and initial funding for working with 6 countries during the year 2017 secured. The main components of the Strategy are; ratification of the Marrakesh Treaty; its domestication through review of national copyright law; and piloting of initiatives to demonstrate the benefits of the Treaty. In May, the ICEVI Africa Vice chair participated in training organised by WBU for the Marrakesh Treaty Resource Persons and is currently leading the ICEVI part of the initiative.
- ICEVI seeks to establish country champions consisting of young blind and partially sighted professionals who will serve as role models as well as advocates for the improvement of the quality of education for learners with visual impairments in their countries. The first team of country champions was established in Kenya in June

2017 and consists of twenty young and successful blind and partially sighted persons. In June, the team visited Thika High School for the Blind where they gave motivational talks to the students.

- The process of registering ICEVI Africa has started. Kenya was selected as the country of registration and the relevant documentation is being prepared. It is hoped that registration will be realized by the end of the year.
- The Management Committee of ICEVI Africa has held two out of four scheduled annual meetings. These included one face-to-face meeting which took place in Pretoria, South Africa in April and one remote meeting which took place in August 2017.

### ***East Asia***

- The regional chairperson and most of the members of the Regional Executive Committee of the region took part at the International Conference of the SEAMEO – SEN (Regional Special Education Centre of the South East Asia Ministers of Education Organisation) in Kuching, Malaysia in July 2017.
- The first country champion program involving 30 visually impaired youth was organised at the Resources for the Blind, Philippines in June 2017. The program was a grand success and the participants have resolved to form a pressure group to influence Governments and other stakeholders to increase education and employment opportunities for persons with visual impairment.
- ICEVI also supported the conduct of the 5th National Parents' Congress of PAVIC involving parents of persons with visual impairment in the Philippines. Dr. Frances Gentle, President, ICEVI took part in this conference in May 2017.
- The regional chairperson attended the meeting of ICEVI-The Nippon Foundation Higher Education coordinators meeting held in Kuching Malaysia on 2nd and 3rd August 2017.
- ICEVI East Asia region will be organizing a regional conference in September / October 2018 in Manila, which will be hosted by the Resources for the Blind, Philippines. More details of the conference will be available soon.

### ***Europe***

- ICEVI-Europe Board Meeting took place on April 20-22, 2017 in Leuven Belgium, wherein organization matters were discussed, along with ICEVI-Europe's involvement in European Programmes and Networks. The last Program Committee Meeting of the upcoming ICEVI European Conference also took place. A moment of silence was

dedicated in memory of the President of ICEVI-Europe, Panagiota (Betty) Leotsakou, who passed away on January 6, 2017.

- Dr. Andrea Hathazi, Coordinator of the ICEVI-Europe Newsletter, in cooperation with Mrs. Mary Lee, Editor of the ICEVI-Europe Newsletter and Mr. Peter Teplicky, ICEVI-Europe Webmaster, published and disseminated one issue of the Newsletter in April 2017. A Special Conference Newsletter was also disseminated in May 2017.
- The Webmaster of ICEVI-Europe is in the final stages of re-launching a new, fully accessible website of ICEVI-Europe. Moreover, in cooperation with Dr. Andrea Hathazi, Mr. Marian Padure, leader of the ICT Interest Group of ICEVI-Europe has generously put forth time and efforts to create and update the new Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/icevieuropel>
- Most of the efforts of the Board of ICEVI-Europe during the period January- June 2017 focused on the final preparations for the 9th ICEVI European Conference: Empowered by dialogue, which took place July 2-7 2017 in Bruges, Belgium. The 9th ICEVI European Conference was organized by ICEVI-Europe in cooperation with the Belgian Organizing Committee, BLL (Blindenzorg licht en liefde), Spermalie and Centrum Ganspoel. The theme of the conference was "Empowered by Dialogue". The program of the conference was based on the Quality of Life Framework and its eight domains that provide an indication of an individual's quality of life in three broad yet related areas: Independence, Social participation and Well-being.
- During the 9th ICEVI European Conference in Bruges, the General Assembly convened, the elections/re-elections of the new Board Members of ICEVI- Europe were held and everyone came together in order to discuss improving the policy of the newly elected Board.
- Meetings of the ICEVI-Europe Professional Interest Groups were held on Tuesday, July 4, 2017, during the 9th ICEVI European Conference in Bruges. The meetings, which fit with the title and theme of the conference, were interactive and allowed for interesting discussion. One member of the board of ICEVI-Europe also attended each Professional Interest Group Meeting and had a preliminary consultation with the Leader of the respective Professional Interest Group, for preparing this meeting.
- During the General Assembly in Bruges, the Presentation of the ICEVI-European Awards 2017 took place. The Board of ICEVI-Europe proudly decided to continue the tradition of presenting an award to individuals and organizations that have made a significant improvement in the quality of life of people with visual impairment. ICEVI-European Award 2017 Recipients:
  1. Late Panagiota (Betty) Leotsakou
  2. Perkins International
  3. Elizabeth (Kate) Chapman

## ***Latin America***

- ICEVI was registered as a legal entity in the Latin America region and the Resolution N°557/2016 issued the 7th November 2016 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uruguay recognizes ICEVI Latinoamérica as a regional organization part of the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment. In February 2017 the region opened Institutional Bank account in three currencies: Dollars, Euros, and Uruguayan pesos.
- Conducted orientation meetings in the following countries: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay.
- The EFA-VI Campaign is taking place actively in Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Paraguay, and the training activities are being conducted in the required way according to the action plan of each country. The region has also conducted training activities in Mexico and Peru, aimed at teachers, professionals and families.
- In accordance with the 2nd Strategic Goal of ICEVI Global, young leaders (or "champions") are being identified and trained. An example of this is an activity conducted in Tabasco, Mexico where two leaders were trained in the field of inclusive education, and will replicate this training in the rest of the country.
- Latin America owns a Facebook Page: ICEVI Latinoamérica, a Twitter account: @ICEVI\_LA and the region has distributed its first newsletter that will be released twice a year and through these strategies the region will disseminate the information on all activities of ICEVI Latinoamérica. There is also an accessible online application form to become a member of the organization.
- Engaged in training activities during the Congress of RIADIS in Cuba; during the Congress on Deafblindness organised by the Argentinean Parents Association; at the Meeting of Blind Women organised by the Federation of Blind People of Argentina; and the region is planning to participate in the Course "University and Disability" organized by FOAL and AECID in Uruguay in October; and in the Congress of Community Based Rehabilitation in Ecuador in November.
- Signed Memorandums of Understanding between ICEVI Latinoamérica and the Latin American Union of the Blind (ULAC), Once Foundation for Latin America (FOAL) and the Latin-American Network of Non Governmental Organizations of People with Impairments and their Families (RIADIS).
- Planning to conduct a joint Congress with ULAC in 2020 on inclusive education and Joint Assemblies, replicating the Joint Assembly model of ICEVI Global and WBU. The region has already launched the call for the host country applications in the sub regions of Central America and Andean.

- Created a joint working group of members of ULAC and ICEVI Latinoamérica that seeks to reactivate the national Braille presses evaluating the Braille production and providing training if necessary.
- Participated in FOAL's Patronage Meeting in Madrid and in a gathering of FOAL's volunteers who are willing to deliver training programs in Latin America, which took place in Seville. FOAL, AECID and ICEVI Latinoamérica are planning to conduct a Seminar on Educational Environments of Social Interaction, in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, for representatives of the 19 countries of the region that will take place in December. The Seminar will address the fields of physical education, art class, recreation, technology, etc., and will be provided by FOAL's volunteers and representatives of ICEVI Latinoamérica.

### ***North America and the Caribbean***

In response to the resolution of the ICEVI Strategy Review meeting held in Pretoria in February 2017, the Regional Chairperson headed a committee to develop a start-up curriculum for teachers to facilitate inclusion of children with visual impairment in educational programmes. The curriculum has been prepared and has been circulated to academics and ICEVI EXCO for inputs.

Regular conference calls were held to strengthen the collaboration between ICEVI and WBU in the region

### ***Pacific***

- In January 2017, the biennial South Pacific Educators in Vision Impairment conference was convened in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia. The theme of the SPEVI conference was Shining the Light on Vision Education. Another important aspect of the conference was the Parent Day where parents of children with vision impairment gathered and presentations focused on the role of parents in vision education. ICEVI was represented at the conference by Ben Clare, Regional Chairperson and Dr Frances Gentle, President of ICEVI. ICEVI is also represented on the SPEVI Committee of Management.
- In February, ICEVI was represented at the 5th Conference on Disability, held in Apia, Samoa. Organised by the Pacific Disability Forum and funded by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, this conference focused on the 10th anniversary of the UNCRPD and looking beyond the Millennium Development Goals. At the conclusion of the conference, the Regional chair conducted a training workshop on behalf of ICEVI and at the invitation of the Samoa Blind Association, a newly formed group of blind and low vision Samoans focusing on equal access to education for all blind people throughout the country.

- In May 2017, Ben Clare, Regional Chair travelled to Papua New Guinea and delivered the first ever Braille machine maintenance training workshop, presented on behalf of ICEVI and Perkins Solutions. Thanks to CBM and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for their support too. The eight trainees were drawn from Callan Services National Unit, a special ministry of the Christian Brothers Oceania that provides various services for people with disability throughout Papua New Guinea, including school support for blind and vision impaired students. The 1-week training workshop was highly successful and resulted in the repair of 16 Braillers which had been inoperable for many years. These machines are now back in circulation and are being utilised by students attending school and the University of Goroka.
- In July 2017, ICEVI assisted the Fiji Society for the Blind with the production of Braille school exam papers. The Fiji Society for the Blind has existed since the early 1970's and offers a wide range of service to blind and vision impaired Fijians and nearby Pacific island nations. Within the Society is the Fiji School for the Blind which has approximately 20 students enrolled directly and a further 16 students who are studying in mainstream schools across the country. The Society is the only service provider of its kind in Fiji.
- ICEVI Pacific assisted the Kiribati Institute of Technology with the enrolment of students with disability. The Kiribati Institute of Technology (KIT) is a government funded vocational training facility where various courses ranging from automotive to IT and hospitality are offered. Through an extensive partnership with Tertiary and Further Education (TAFE) colleges in Australia, KIT is able to graduate students with qualifications that are fully recognised and endorsed in Australia and Internationally.
- In line with the Kiribati Ministry of Education's inclusive education policy, KIT has recognised the need for inclusion of people with disability in as many courses and areas of study as possible. The involvement of the Regional Chair with KIT commenced last year while he was volunteering in Kiribati for six months at the Kiribati School and Centre for Children with Special Needs (KSCSSN,) the only facility of its kind in the country.
- ICEVI Pacific sought to extend the involvement of people with disability in KIT's courses, not limited to the Special School but also including the national advocacy group, known as Tetoa Matoa (TTM.) Several TTM members expressed their willingness to study at KIT and had been lobbying the Ministry of Education for several years for inclusion as part of the inclusive education policy where TTM was widely consulted.
- Students with hearing impairment are about to commence carpentry courses at KIT. These students are highly literate, having studied in Fiji and belong to Kiribati's first ever deaf club.

## **West Asia**

- UNESCO New Delhi organized a meeting of the Inter-agency Working Group at Gandhinagar in India on 18th May, 2017. The focus of meeting was to augment coordination, partnership among departments and across sectors to promote rights of children with disabilities to quality education. ICEVI was represented at the meeting by the Regional Chair and Treasurer.
- Bhushan Punani, Chairperson, ICEVI West Asia and Bipin Mehta, Manager, Inclusive Education, BPA were invited by UNICEF to conduct 2 days' Workshop for District SSA Coordinators for monitoring of inclusive education in Bihar. The purpose of the Workshop was to sensitize the District Coordinators of Inclusive Education as regard specific needs of children with disabilities who have been enrolled in the regular schools.
- Bhushan Punani conducted training of 2 batches of CBR Coordinators of the Jan Vikas Sansthan at Varanasi. The training included session on monitoring and management of CBR projects, understanding of Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016, inclusive education and components of the Rights to Education Act, 2009.
- Amar Jyoti, one of the leading organizations in India promoting inclusive education, organized a Workshop on Bridging the Research, Policy and Practice Divide in the field of education of children with disabilities in New Delhi on 9th August, 2017. The Workshop was conducted by Ms. Nidhi, Faculty of Cambridge University and Ms. Anupam Ahuja of NCERT.
- UNESCO, Delhi organized the National Consultation Meeting of Promoting the Right to Quality Education for Children with Disabilities in New Delhi on 23rd August, 2017. Bhushan Punani represented ICEVI West Asia in this meeting.
- The region will be organizing a national conference jointly hosted by ICEVI and Sense International India in December 2017. A meeting of the Principal Officers and the Country Champion Program will be organised in conjunction with this conference.

## **Meeting of the Global Campaign for Education**

The Global Campaign for Education (GCE) hosted a two-day meeting on 22nd and 23rd February 2017 in London involving the international NGOs and Northern Education Coalitions on the theme of "Strengthening the education movement and joint planning for 2017". Participants included GCE member coalitions in Europe and North America, GCE INGO members including ICEVI, organisations involved in campaigning on education including the Malala Fund, IDDC members, Human Rights Watch, and invited representatives of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), Education Cannot Wait and the Education Finance Commission. The meeting's objectives were (a) to plan an effective

and high profile joint campaign on education financing in 2017, (b) to strengthen the global education movement, and (c) to prepare for the Global Action Week on Education in 2017.

Dr. Frances Gentle and Dr. Praveena Sukhraj-Ely represented ICEVI at the GCE meeting, and extended ICEVI's thanks to David Archer and the GCE Board for an informative event.

## **South Africa Education Seminar**

ICEVI hosted the South Africa Education Seminar in partnership with Blind SA, Gauteng Department of Education and Prinshof School for the Blind in Pretoria. The seminar took place at the Prinshof School during February 2017, with Prinshof staff and students offering a warm welcome to the 132 participants. Participants included educators from early childhood centres, schools, colleges and universities; officials from the Gauteng government and education department; representatives of non-government organisations; suppliers and parents. The Seminar theme was "Implementation of inclusive education for blind and partially sighted learners in South Africa: A reality or dream", and the plenary and concurrent sessions addressed the following topics:

- The South African experience and challenges
- Synergies between the roles of the Department of Education, special schools, mainstream schools, district-based support teams, teachers and parents, orientation and mobility, and support services
- Early childhood development
- Teacher training and support and the role of training of itinerant teachers, facilitators and teacher aides
- Braille, DAISY – Accessible textbooks, learner teacher support material (LTSM) and other learning materials, assistive devices and adapted and mainstream technology
- Teaching deafblind and blind multiple disabled learners with the primary disability of vision impairment

The Seminar was a great success and provided the opportunity for ICEVI Executive Committee members to contribute their expertise and global perspectives on education for children with vision impairment. ICEVI has also suggested that similar forums should be organised in conjunction with its future meetings, which will give an opportunity to interact with educators and professionals at country levels.

## **Inclusive Education South Africa Workshops**

Frances Gentle, President ICEVI was invited by Inclusive Education South Africa (IESA) to host two workshops in Cape Town on the theme of "Including children with vision

impairment in pre-school and school settings” on 18th and 19th February 2017. The workshops focussed on inclusive approaches to modifying the curriculum, teaching pedagogy and learning environments for children and young people with vision impairment. The 115 participants included educators and parents of preschool and school-age children with vision impairment who are enrolled in mainstream and special school settings, together with government officials, therapists, learning support advisors, and psychologists. Practical activities included sighted guide techniques, use of the kinaesthetic sense with physical activity to promote concept development and learning, and use of touch as a teaching tool. ICEVI extends its thanks to Caroline Taylor and the IESA team for facilitating the workshops.

## **ICEVI in CCNGO/EFA Meeting**

The Collective Consultation of NGOs on Education (CCNGO) was established by the Education Sector in 1984 as a mechanism to facilitate dialogue between UNESCO and non-government organizations (NGOs) on the theme of literacy. The role of the CCNGO has expanded since the launch of the Education for All (EFA) movement in Jomtien in 1990, a movement that has served as the basis of the ICEVI-WBU EFA-VI global campaign since 2006. The CCNGO/EFA is now UNESCO's key mechanism for dialogue, reflection and partnerships with NGOs and the global education community in relation to implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal 4 for education and the Education 2030 Framework for Action. Going forward, ICEVI's EFA-VI campaign will be closely aligned with SDG4 and the Framework for Action.

Summarized below are the key actions from the Siem Reap meeting:

1. Change of name from CCNGO/EFA to CCNGO/Education 2030, to reflect the absorption of the EFA movement into the Education 2030 Framework for Action.
2. Election of the CCNGO Coordination Group for 2017-18, consisting of regional and international Focal Points and directly elected Members.
3. Release of an outcomes document entitled the “CCNGO/Education 2030 Global Meeting Declaration”, which includes general recommendations, actions for civil society, and recommendations for CCNGO members.

The meeting closed with an expression of thanks to the organizers: UNESCO and the Cambodian government NGO Education Partnership (NEP).

## **Participation in 5th Parents' Congress, Philippines**

ICEVI was one of the co-sponsors of the 5th Parents' Congress of the Parent Advocates for Visually Impaired Children Inc. (PAVIC), in Metro-Manila Philippines, 12-14 May 2017.

PAVIC was founded in 1999 by about 12 parents of children with blindness, low vision, and visual impairment with additional disabilities. The PAVIC Mission is to “advocate actively for all visually impaired children by providing support to their family and promoting partnerships with social institutions that will result in awareness, acceptance and access”.

The theme of the 5th Parents’ Congress was “Connecting families towards equity and access”, and the plenary sessions addressed the topics of raising a child with visual impairment, accessing quality education and government services, and going out into the world. ICEVI was represented by Dr. Frances Gentle and joined the 150 parents and other stakeholders who travelled from a wide geographical area to attend the Congress. An important component of the Congress was the situational analysis of services across the Regions of the Philippines and action planning for 2017. Through these activities, the parents from each region came together to share the joys and challenges of parenting, and to collaboratively plan region-specific activities that would yield tangible results for their children. The planning process was empowering and friendship building, with new and returning Congress delegates supporting each other.

PAVIC is a non-governmental organization with a Board of Trustees that consists of voluntary members. PAVIC works closely with the Resources for the Blind Inc. (RBI) and other national organizations to provide parent seminars and workshops, and offers a highly successful national sporting event each year for children with visual impairment. PAVIC’s President, Board and Members play a vital role in creating public awareness of the education and welfare needs of children with visual impairment in the Philippines, and through their efforts, PAVIC’s membership has grown to 710 parents as at December 2016.

ICEVI recognizes PAVIC as an excellent example of the potential power of parents and the importance of parent-educator partnerships in promoting the right to education and quality of life for children with visual impairment from birth to adulthood. Encouraging Parents’ organizations is a vital component of ICEVI activities and ICEVI will seek PAVIC’s support in promoting parent organizations in other countries in the East Asia region. ICEVI is also planning to assist PAVIC in preparing booklets on “Tips for Parents in rearing children with Visual Impairment” and in preparing audio visual materials.

# Setting the Table for Success: Matching Student Skills with Employment

**Jaqueline Gomez Trujillo**, Special Education Teacher, ASOMAS, Mexico  
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Alfonso is a 17-year-old who is active, intelligent, responsible, hard-working, and good-looking, with a great liking for music. He lives near Mexico City in the municipality of Naucalpan. Alfonso is a student of the Asociación Mexicana Anne Sullivan IAP (ASOMAS), an institution dedicated to the education of children and adolescents who are deafblind with multiple disabilities.

Alfonso's road has been a long and arduous one. He was born in September of 1999 with blindness and psychomotor delays due to prematurity. The first years of his life were difficult because he had several eye surgeries and long periods in the hospital. His family heard only discouraging prognoses for their only child.

But one day Alfonso began to thrive. He began to gain weight and grow. He didn't need the oxygen tank any more, and there were no more eye surgeries.

After his medical adventures, Alfonso received support and help from many specialists: pediatricians, early stimulation and communication interventionists, and social workers. Each one brought great learning and positive experiences to Alfonso's life. The change they brought

was like the first light in an infinite series of lights.

The new learning, therapies, and advice led Alfonso's parents to look for a school for him. They took him to the CAM 14 (Centro de Atención Multiple) in the municipality of Naucalpan. When Alfonso first came, he still didn't walk, but he had a great interest in exploring and discovering whatever touched his hands. At CAM 14, his legs began to gain strength, his neck and thorax became aligned, and he took his first steps. He walked holding on to furniture, walls, and his best support, the arms of his mother and father.

Alfonso's parents are his most enthusiastic teachers, and are always ready to confront new challenges with him. As they continued to search for the right school for their son, they encountered some that were not prepared to help him. They met professionals with little empathy, little knowledge of visual disability, and a critical attitude about Alfonso's possibilities.

His parents never gave up, and a little before his fifth birthday, they started the physiological adventure of toilet training him. His father is a taxi driver, and took Alfonso with him so he could take him to the bathroom punctually.

Alfonso's parents decided to register him in CAM in Polanco, where his father could be more supportive. He assisted the teacher in many diverse activities, but the attention and the approach did not meet expectations. Alfonso's parents decided to enrol him in first grade at the school where his mother worked. The social-affective experience for Alfonso was quite enriching as he interacted, played, and worked with other children of his age. However the school was not able to meet Alfonso's needs in every one of his developmental areas. Fortunately, the school authorities helped find a school with specialised teachers and expertise in education for blind children.

At the age of nine Alfonso entered CHIPI: Centro de Habilidades e Integración para Personas Invidentes IAP. Here he began to consolidate processes of autonomy and independence, like eating alone and going to the bathroom. Alfonso showed a great interest in music, and he became part of the school band and another group called Estudiantina.

In 2013, Alfonso was 13, with good basic abilities. He was able to learn new activities, and welcomed challenges and new experiences. The family decided to enroll him at ASOMAS, which was closer to his home. Here he demonstrated his ability to move from one place to another, follow simple instructions, express his basic needs, such as eating and using the bathroom. Almost all without help! He is tolerant of parties, noise, and large groups. He follows the sequence of a musical rhythm.

Alfonso overcame some challenges. He showed anxiety when he heard noises like the blender, a drill, or a vacuum cleaner; sometimes he would even be auto-aggressive. He worked with these issues, and soon he learned to breathe deeply to calm his nerves. He talked about the situation, and used the blender for cooking class. Little by little he learned to tolerate more stress without getting upset.

By 2016 he had greatly advanced in his communicative, cognitive, social and mobility abilities, so he was chosen to work three days a week in a Transition to Adulthood group, where he participated in two vocational projects. During the first trimester, from September to November, he collaborated in making "kits for the bathroom." He showed a great ability in sandpapering and painting the small ceramic tubs that were part of the kits. Then the group crafted hand-made soaps, rolled little face towels, and filled bottles with liquid soap. In the second trimester, from December to February, they created therapeutic bags and masks. The group cleaned and weighed the seeds, mixed them with the aromatic herbs, and filled the bags and masks.

On days that the group wasn't working on their vocational projects, they worked in the classroom. They learned and reinforced communicative abilities, and recognising the day, month, and year. They also worked on functional academic skills, making simple kitchen recipes.

The staff watched Alfonso in his music, plastic arts, and yoga classes, evaluating

his learning processes and identifying his potentialities and his weaknesses. We agreed with Alfonso's parents that he definitely had the ability to improve these skills, and collaborated to create age-appropriate learning goals for the academic year. At the beginning of the school year we worked on Alfonso's autonomy and independence in the areas of communication, physical therapy, and occupational therapy.

We searched for a vocational activity that would use all of Alfonso's previous learning and significant experiences. We considered jobs within the institution, such as taking out the garbage, emptying classroom wastebaskets, or packing chips and candies to sell. However, our goal was fostering Alfonso's autonomy, independence, mobility skills, and communication and social abilities. We wanted to integrate his previous cognitive and learning abilities in a new space, so we searched for an off-campus job near the ASOMAS school.

We went door-to-door in the neighborhood, telling the businesses about Alfonso and how the participation of a person with disabilities in a community can benefit both the individual and society. One of the businesspeople we met with was the owner of a restaurant called Limón y Chio. We talked about the mission and programmes of our institution, our school hours, and the population that we work with. The owner was quite interested, but had some doubts about the activities and service hours.

After our conversation we gave the owner and the staff a questionnaire, from which

we learned that many of them had no knowledge about multiple disabilities. How should they be treated? One of the questions asked if they would give a job to a person with multiple disabilities. They said YES with a smile on their faces. I left with great emotion and pride for ASOMAS.



The next step was to determine the job activities that Alfonso would do in the restaurant. One option was washing and peeling vegetables and fruit. However, it would have been complicated to install the physical adaptations needed in the kitchen, and the variety of vegetables could be challenging. Another option was washing dishes, but the hours were not compatible with Alfonso's school schedule. The best activity was setting tables, which he could do before the restaurant opened. The objects were familiar to Alfonso: table, tablecloth, glasses, knives, forks, spoons, and napkins. The space was big, so we decided to do an activity with the restaurant's waiters. They had to set the table, but blindfolded! The result was fabulous; the commentaries were admirable and full of empathy. The waiters were compassionate but said that they felt strange while doing the activity.



The big day when Alfonso starting working was full of emotions, starting with the moment we told him that he was going to the place where he would work every Thursday. He seemed

nervous! When we arrived at the restaurant he stayed attentive, listening to the sounds around him. When the owner greeted him, Alfonso just shook hands, but did not answer verbally. When the rest of the staff was presented to him he just gave a little smile. He went over the whole place slowly and attentively, recognising the environment. Everything was ready for Alfonso's presentation.

On the day that we began teaching Alfonso his job, we started by setting two tables in a coactive practice. We positioned a big table cloth and then a small one, four glasses, silverware, napkins, plates, and four chairs. As we had predicted, Alfonso had a great response. Several days passed and we improved the processes. We adapted his apron with spaces for the knives, forks, and spoons.



We created a basket with four spaces to carry the glasses, and we set up a service table where he puts everything together before setting the table. Alfonso encountered new sounds like the Waring blender, which he tolerated with no problem. A staff member always goes with him to the restaurant, and on the way he verbally expresses his orientation references: cars, bump, street, etc. When he arrives at the restaurant, Alfonso politely says, "Good Morning."

When he finishes work he enthusiastically says, "Coins." He is eager to get to this point! Alfonso is enthusiastic and



responsible, and he really enjoys his job. Every day he tries to improve his movements, works to follow a sequence in the process, and interacts with different people. He controls and manages his emotions, and uses basic counting skills (one by one) when putting the silverware and glasses on each table.

Without doubt this has been a great experience for Alfonso. He is motivated, his contribution is important, and he is recognised for his contribution in the world outside his school. He has shown great skill in handling the fragile crystal glasses, adapting to the new experiences of cleaning the tables, and putting all the necessary things out at the right time and in the right place. Interacting with the staff and clients at the restaurant has been very positive, both for Alfonso and the people who meet him.

Many people think that community inclusion and competitive jobs for people with deafblindness and/or multiple disabilities are impossible. This belief is common, not only among employers and the general public, but sometimes even among social service providers. Too often people believe that a deafblind person, particularly if there is another disability, cannot possibly work in a competitive job. Experienced professionals know that these beliefs are false, and that people with deafblindness, with or without other disabilities, have the right and ability to be included in society and the working world.

# Transition to Adulthood: A Story of Precy and her Precious Products

Ampy B. Pelaez, Philippines

My name is Ampy B. Pelaez, mother of Precy Pelaez, a 20-year-old entrepreneur whose small business is called Precious Products. Precy was born with retinopathy of prematurity, which causes her to have significant global challenges and blindness. She is my eldest child, and she has three younger brothers. This article is about Precy's journey to adulthood.

## Receiving Support in the Early Days

We live in Metro Manila, the capital of the Philippines, where we have access to support services. Even with support, our journey of raising Precy was a challenging one. As parents of a child with significant challenges, we often experience mixed emotions. Sometimes we find ourselves at a loss, not knowing how to raise our girl.

However, we are also very lucky to have found outstanding service providers like Resources for the Blind (RBI), who guided us and gave us direction as we raised Precy. When she was little, Precy received early intervention services at RBI. She participated in occupational and speech therapy from various rehabilitation centers for 16 years. We also benefit from the Association of Therapy Centers in the Philippines, and from the National Council for the Disabled Persons, a government support agency that assists people with

disabilities. I am a member of Parent Advocates for Visually Impaired Children (PAVIC), who have become our extended family. Without all these supports, I cannot imagine where we would be today.

## Situation of Employment for Adults with MDVI

Despite these supports, when Precy turned 18, we found ourselves in a transition stage. We needed to begin preparing Precy for adult life, a life of her own without her parents beside her all the time. At this age, her peers were planning for their lives after high school. Some of them were talking about college applications. With Precy's limitations, I had already accepted the fact that she will not go to a higher level of education. I needed to think of an endeavour that would best work for her.

The Philippines has comprehensive anti-discrimination laws that protect the rights of people with disabilities. Despite these policies, there is still a huge gap when children turn 18. When students leave school, they leave all the support services available to children with disabilities. It is very difficult to find employment or a programme for adults with multiple disabilities and visual impairment (MDVI). For an individual like Precy, there are no programmes that accommodate her needs

and help her find a dependable livelihood. The economic and emotional cost of supporting an adult with significant needs is a burden to many families in the Philippines.

### **How Precious Products Begun**

A couple years ago, RBI and PAVIC partnered with Perkins International to conduct a seminar on creating transition programmes for children with MDVI. The training focused on getting to know the strengths and interests of our child, and letting this guide us in our planning. My husband and I attended this seminar, along with Precy's caregiver and her special education teacher, Ms. Evelyn Matienzo. This is where we got the idea of working together to prepare Precy as an entrepreneur. This was the beginning of Precious Products.

We assessed Precy's skills, and realised how much she loved mixing liquids. So we started having her mix various liquids to create homemade dishwashing liquid, fabric conditioner, all-purpose cleaner, and body colognes. We packaged them and sold them to our friends and neighbors. They were successful, and we slowly started to sell to a larger market. Since the beginning, we have added a few more products, including body scrubs, gel air freshener, herbal bath soaps, and peel-off masks. Precy mixes all the raw materials in a container during her work hours. These activities in creating her products serve as her therapy now that she is an adult.

### **Where We Go From Here**

Precious Products is not the end product of our work. Instead, we dream that it will be a catalyst for advocacy of employment and creation of transition programmes for individuals with MDVI. We hope that Precy's products will make the public realise that individuals like Precy can be productive members of society.

Currently, there are no employment opportunities for adults with multiple disabilities. We hope that Precious Products can provide livelihood opportunities for individuals with visual impairment and other disabilities, and that more businesses will grow in this light.

### **A More Personal Note**

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Perkins International for its partnership with RBI and PAVIC, providing invaluable support to children with MDVI in the Philippines. I particularly thank Ms. Deborah Gleason, Regional Coordinator of the Asia & Pacific Region of Perkins International, and Ms. Ami Tango-Limketkai, Project Coordinator of Perkins International's work in the Philippines. I felt their love as well as their commitment to uplift the lives of all our children. This has inspired me to see possibilities for my daughter.

I hope that Precy, through Precious Products, can touch the lives of individuals with MDVI as well as to the other members of society. Lastly, it is important for me to say that Precy's blindness will not be a hindrance to all her dreams towards success.

Our former president of the Philippines said this:

*"Our Government pledged inclusive growth to the Filipino people. Most people take this in the context of economics –of providing opportunities for the poor—but when we promised inclusive growth, we promised it to all Filipinos, including those who by virtue of certain limitations, tend to be thought of as being unable to contribute to society. This is not necessarily a mindset that comes from cruelty, but one that perhaps only stems from ignorance and mistaken notions. And this is something that we*

*want to change, because we know that to perpetuate this prejudice means not only depriving persons with disabilities of their rights, but more importantly, depriving them of their dreams." (Aquino, 2011)*

### **Mabuhay! (Live!)**

Aquino, B. (2011). President Aquino's Speech at the Asia-Pacific Community-based Rehabilitation Congress, November 29, 2011. Official Gazette. Retrieved from: <http://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2011/11/29/speech-of-president-aquino-at-the-2nd-asia-pacific-community-based-rehabilitation-congress-november-29-2011/>

**AN INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION IS AN INVESTMENT IN A CHILD'S FUTURE**

**Will you help me hasten the day when there shall be no blind child untaught?**

- Helen Keller

# **Perkins Pre-Employment Program: Transition Programming for Students with Visual Impairments**

**Jessica Erlich Brown**, Assistant Education Director, Community Programs

**Kate Katulak**, Teacher of the Visually Impaired & **Teri Turgeon**, Director, Community Programs

*Perkins School for the Blind, United States*

## **Introduction**

In 2015 the U.S. Census reported that only 40% of working-age adults with a visual impairment were employed, compared to 72% of the total population of working-age adults in America. Given this alarming data, we at Perkins School for the Blind have reaffirmed our commitment to identify and combat the causes of this unemployment. Under the direction of CEO and President Dave Power, Perkins has recently introduced initiatives that focus on transition and career education for individuals who are blind or visually impaired. One such example is the Pre-Employment Program (PEP), a 10-session workshop that teaches young adults the skills they need for workplace success. Launched in January of 2016 and continuing in the upcoming semester, PEP is a uniquely structured job readiness programme that prepares participants to obtain and maintain gainful employment.

## **Perkins School for the Blind**

Established in 1829 as the first school for the blind in the United States, Perkins has a long history of innovative programming and a widespread influence on the field of blindness. The school is well known in the

greater Boston area, but its impact extends beyond on-campus educational services. In addition to enrolment at our main campus in Watertown, Massachusetts, with students ages 3-22 across the Lower School, Secondary and Deafblind Programs, Perkins provides direct and indirect services to individuals who are blind, deafblind and visually impaired throughout New England. In the 2016 fiscal year, Perkins' off-campus services reached over 500 children ages 0-3 through our Infant-Toddler Program, and an additional 350 students through our off-campus teachers. Within the past six years, our international programme, Perkins International, has increased outreach to children, adults, educators, and caregivers by 78%. Perkins Solutions provided assistive technology to over 23,000 individuals, enabling them to live life more independently. With the development of the Pre-Employment Program, Perkins continues our mission of affecting change.

## **The Team**

PEP was conceived as a response to customer surveys conducted by our marketing department to identify service gaps at Perkins and our surrounding

outreach areas. We were not surprised to discover a lack of transition education for students with visual impairments within public school settings. Understanding that our target market lay beyond the students on campus, the programme was placed under the Community Programs division, and its director, Teri Turgeon. Turgeon also oversees the Infant-Toddler and Educational Partnerships Programs, and spearheads other initiatives. Outreach Short Courses for public school students focus on Expanded Core Curriculum areas and socialisation opportunities with peers who have visual impairments. Community Living Services provide support to adults with deafblindness and additional disabilities.

In the summer of 2015, Turgeon and CEO Power assembled a core team. This included Dr. Karen Wolffe, a leading expert in the field of transition and blindness. She is author of over seven related books, including Skills for Success and Transition Tote System: Navigating the Rapids of Life. Perkins faculty, along with Dr. Wolffe, developed the content and structure of the course, while Patrick Ryan, Outreach Supervisor for Community Programs, led recruitment efforts. Jessica Erlich Brown, Assistant Education Director of Community Programs, and Kate Katulak, Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments, piloted the programme as co-facilitators.

Brown and Katulak alternated lead teaching roles, depending on the topic. Brown brought over 10 years of experience as a field TVI and programme administrator. Katulak, an individual who is blind herself,

offered a real-world perspective and strategies for overcoming the difficulties in seeking employment with a visual impairment. For instance, she spoke of a time when she was turned away from an interview when the employer saw her cane.

PEP was designed specifically for youth and young adults with visual impairments who intend to enter competitive employment settings. In the fall of 2015, the team focused on recruiting participants and finalising curriculum. Large-print and braille student manuals were created by integrating a variety of materials from the transition field. Wolffe's *Transition Tote*, as well as The Royal National Institute for the Blind provided primary material, along with online resources including the American Foundation for the Blind's Career Connect website.

The Pre-Employment Program's launch was in January of 2016 at our Watertown campus. With an inaugural class of 13 students, Community Programs staff geared up for the first of ten sessions that extended into May. Along with the co-facilitators, staff included an assistive technology specialist and a teaching assistant. In addition to a host of traditional pre-employment skills, like interviewing techniques and job search methods, the programme taught student-job candidates how to deal with obstacles unique to those with disabilities. Meeting career professionals with visual impairments and learning how to use social media platforms in the job seeking process added motivation and current practicality to the programme.

## **Programme Structure**

The course had three main sections, with the first part centering on self-awareness and career exploration. Students participated in activities to gain a deeper understanding of their skills and interests related to various career fields. Part two focused on job seeking skills, allowing students to explore techniques for finding jobs, while providing them necessary materials. The third segment connected what students had learned by emphasising strategies for applying their new skills. Each session started with coffee and conversation, emulating the work atmosphere “water cooler” experience.

Content was delivered through one-hour lectures followed by a computer lab component, where participants honed their technology skills and developed an online presence for future employability. Through online assessment tools, participants generated a summary code to assist in finding fields of study and employment that matched their personalities. They then analysed their work personalities and possible challenges they may face in their vocational endeavors. Mornings concluded with panel discussions organised congruently with session topics. These forums provided an opportunity for students to ask work-related questions of career professionals with visual impairments, as well as hiring experts and employment specialists.

The Perkins Business Partnership (PBP), an alliance between Perkins and some of Massachusetts' best-known businesses,

supported the effort, as members brought real-world experiences to panel discussions and led participant interviews. PBP members are committed to breaking down barriers to employment and expanding opportunities for individuals who are blind and visually impaired. The meeting of PEP participants and Boston business-people gave weight to the programme, corroborating the material Brown and Katulak taught. PBP members echoed the importance of interviewing skills, the quality of cover letters, and the appropriateness of post-interview follow-ups.

Between sessions, students used Yammer, a social networking site for businesses, to discuss and expand upon what they learned during the workshops. Yammer was chosen specifically for its accessibility to screen readers and attractiveness to potential employers. The site offered a forum for discussions, information sharing, and a way for participants and facilitators to connect out of class.

## **Student Makeup**

Of the original 15 students, 13 completed the programme. Five of the students were braille readers; three were totally blind, and seven had low vision. Of the 13 participants, nine were on an academic track while four were functionally academic. Two were enrolled in college while the rest were high-school students, two of whom were Perkins on-campus students. Three were current or former Community Programs students, 12 were from public schools in Massachusetts and

one traveled from Maine. The means of transportation to and from the sessions varied. Three students took paratransit, nine were driven by family members, and the student from Maine independently took a short flight and a taxi to most sessions. Two types of certificates were available; nine students finished all coursework requirements and earned a certificate of completion, and the remaining four students received a certificate of attendance.

### **Programme Objectives**

Each student left PEP with an individualised (self-developed) action plan, detailing a one- to three-year strategy toward future employability. The programme left students better equipped for a job interview; each prepared an elevator pitch, a disability statement, and practiced the most common interview questions. The participants enhanced their self-advocacy skills, as they learned how and when to disclose a disability in a job interview setting. Students cultivated personal networks and improved their confidence in initiating more work opportunities.

### **Outcomes**

The pilot programme provided a safe environment for students with visual impairments to learn the skills necessary for workplace success. Throughout the 10-week workshop, they learned to network and deepen peer connections. One-on-one final mock interviews focused on jobs which students aspired to within the next

two years. One student earned a summer internship placement resulting from her final mock interview. Two PEP participants went on to participate in Perkins Outreach's five-week World of Work summer programme. After reflecting on her limited resume, one student expanded her experience with a summer internship as a receptionist. One of our youngest participants (not yet 16) applied for several jobs over the summer, but hit age barriers. He refocused his efforts toward volunteer work, and plans on undertaking paid work next year.

### **Conclusion**

The PEP programme is designed to counteract the difficulty that people with visual impairments and blindness encounter when seeking employment. PEP's dual approach of explicitly teaching job readiness skills while tackling challenges unique to those with visual impairment, gives students a solid foundation and an action plan; the tools for success. As we prepare for the upcoming PEP semester, we are reviewing our curriculum, processing applications, and scheduling panelists. This programme, like all Perkins programming, keeps our mission at the forefront of our efforts: Perkins School for the Blind is a progressive, multi-faceted organisation working around the world to prepare children and young adults who are blind or deafblind with the education, confidence and skills they need to realise their full potential.

# Inclusive Approach to Community Education and People with Severe and Multiple Disabilities

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## Introduction

The United Nations challenges all nations to improve the opportunities for people with disabilities. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Article 19) states: "Inclusive education requires recognition of the right of persons with disabilities to live within the community and enjoy inclusion and participation in the community. It also demands recognition of the equal right of persons with disabilities to family life, or, failing that, to alternative care within a community setting". In 2016 the Convention added an emphasis on the right to inclusive education.

While many societies have made progress in the inclusion of people with learning disabilities in various life domains, for people with the most severe or with multiple disabilities, many obstacles remain. Professionals within the health, rehabilitation, and education fields are challenged to widen their perspectives and increase opportunities for participation and activity.

For successful inclusion of people with severe disabilities, changes are needed at different levels – changes in the competencies of professionals, changes at

the level of service providers, and changes at the community level.

The Model for Inclusive Community Education (MINCE) is a seven-nation initiative within the European Erasmus+ Programme. The MINCE programme's aim is to raise society's awareness about the needs of people with severe disabilities: intellectual, multiple sensory, motor, communication, and or health. MINCE offers informal education tools and practical ideas for how to systematically implement a social model of thinking and acting. Croatia's Mali dom-Zagreb contributes its extensive experience in providing services for people with sensory impairments and additional disabilities. This article will explore the MINCE project and some of its intellectual outputs.

## The Model for Inclusive Community Education (MINCE)

The Model for Inclusive Community Education is a collaboration of disability care and educational organisations from seven different European countries: Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Croatia, Poland, Portugal, and Slovenia. Established in November 2015, the project is scheduled to continue until October 2017.

The aim of the MINCE project is to increase the participation of people with severe disabilities in the community. To achieve this goal, the project participants have developed practical action guidelines for creating low-threshold, quality learning services for this highly diverse group of people. The target group of people includes those with intellectual, sensory (vision, hearing, deafblindness), motor, and health disabilities, all of which require extensive and lifelong support.

Inclusive community education aims to create educational programmes for citizens in the community in which the disability care institution is located. MINCE encourages the recipients of the services, the people with disabilities, to participate in the development of the training modules. The main principle of MINCE is voluntary participation. Only people with disabilities who volunteer to become peer mediators will participate in the trainings.

The six products developed within the framework of the MINCE project include:

- Curriculum for peer educators (including an easy-to-read version)
- “Step Up” -- easy-to-read guidelines and audiobook for peer educators
- Curriculum for disability care workers
- Guidelines for disability care institutions
- Compendium
- MINCE movie.

### **The Curriculum and “Step Up” Guidelines for Peer Mediators**

The Model for Inclusive Community Education includes peer mediators, an

approach with roots in the Swedish and American Self Advocacy Movement of the 1980s. Peer mediators are people with mild disabilities or learning disabilities. Because of their own experiences with institutional interventions in their activities, barriers, and discrimination in everyday life, they are uniquely able to understand and represent the interests of people with more severe disabilities. MINCE has developed a training module for these peer mediators, helping them develop skills in playing a mediatory role between the interests and needs of people with severe disabilities and society.

Topics for the MINCE Curriculum for Peer Mediators were chosen based on the input from focus groups held in all the partner organisations. The focus group participants were adults and young people with intellectual disabilities. The topics increase the participants' knowledge and skills, and teach them how to impart this knowledge to interested parties. In addition, the peer mediators learn how to observe and evaluate the community's proposals for successful inclusion.

The Curriculum offers seven training sessions, which include workshops with exercises, games, and group discussions. The training sessions cover the following:

- Essence of peer mediation;
- Representation of one's own interests and the interests of people with severe intellectual disabilities;
- Communication and active listening;
- Public and private information;
- Making decisions;

- Community;
- Participation and evaluation.

The Curriculum for Peer Mediators is accompanied by "Step Up," a set of guidelines that offers easy-to-read materials and a learning diary for trainees. Both of these guidebooks (MINCE Curriculum for Peer Mediators, and MINCE Guidelines for Peer Educators) are available in easy-to-read and audio format.

For this MINCE project, Mali dom-Zagreb and the Association for Self-Advocacy, both in Zagreb, established a cooperative relationship for the first time. We worked with a focus group of four persons with intellectual disabilities and their assistants, all of whom have long experience in self-advocacy. All of the MINCE partner organisations conducted focus groups, and the feedback from them was integrated into the final version of the Curriculum for Peer Mediators.

These focus groups were very successful, and from them the idea of future partnerships was born. Through sharing between organisations that have experience in self-advocacy, person-centered planning, etc., we see many future possibilities for expanding opportunities for people with disabilities. We see great opportunities for promoting transition-to-adulthood services for young people with sensory disabilities and severe multiple disabilities. Up to this moment, there are too few services or opportunities in Croatia for people with severe disabilities after 21 years of age.

## **The Curriculum for Disability Care Workers and Guidelines for Disability Care Organisations**

According to the MINCE model, service providers, which include professionals, disability care organisations, and rehabilitation centers, are seen as a link between people with severe disabilities and society. To encourage social inclusion, these professionals need additional competencies that were not part of their previous formal education or training.

These competencies require knowledge and training in understanding diversity, discrimination management, appropriate methods of intervention, and competences for actively participating in the development of an inclusive society. MINCE has developed a curriculum for care workers which teaches these required competencies. Additionally, MINCE has developed guidelines that guide disability care institutions on how to adjust their existing services to foster inclusion of people with severe disabilities, and to expand learning opportunities for communities.

Sixty-five professionals participated in the focus groups, coming from various backgrounds, including workshops, home services, occupational services, and intensive care services. They brought multidisciplinary expertise and knowledge, as special education teachers, social workers, psychologists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and managers. The focus groups considered key competencies needed to promote inclusion of people with

severe disabilities, by professionals, organisations, and in the community. The Curriculum for Disability Care Workers and Guidelines for Disability Care Organisations will address some of these competencies like:

- Quality of life for people with severe disabilities;
- Diversity skills;
- Motivation of parents and relatives;
- Person-Centered Thinking.

### Conclusion

Improved participation and more activities for people with sensory and additional disabilities are the most important outcomes of the MINCE educational programme in Mali dom-Zagreb. This improvement called for systematic planning and expansion of options for learning in the community. Increased community outings included visiting different environments, such as markets and libraries, and participating in events of the local community, both in the neighborhood and the wider town. These actions build a bridge toward better understanding between our students and their neighbors. Additionally, it encourages our students to become comfortable in and learn in typical

environments, where skills are actually needed. It shows how educational and rehabilitation services can be embedded into the life of a close community, and how an organisation can open its doors.

The innovative contribution of the MINCE project is in its promotion of social inclusion for people with severe disabilities – people who previously didn't receive much attention. The Model of Inclusive Community Education empowers peer mediators and professionals to become a link between persons with severe disabilities and the community. Its value is highly practical, with training modules that teach skills needed for fostering inclusion of people with severe disabilities. The collection of good practices that will be offered through the MINCE project, can help in encouraging professionals and organisations in overcoming barriers toward social inclusion for people with severe disabilities.

The final conference where all of the products will be presented will be held in Graz in September 2017. More information about the MINCE project and its products can be found on its webpage: [www.mince-project.eu](http://www.mince-project.eu).

# Transition to Adult Life in Chile — A New Approach

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In Chile, as in the rest of Latin America, the attitude toward people with disabilities has been paternalistic. The belief is that they are vulnerable and must be protected. People who are blind with additional disabilities are particularly likely to encounter this pitying attitude.

For people with blindness, access to culture, education, and social integration has been limited for centuries. Fortunately, this situation has improved during the last decades. Because many people who are blind have excelled as poets, musicians, or thinkers, society has begun to recognize their abilities. Historical and contemporary figures such as Homer, Dídimos, John of Luxemburg, Jorge Luis Borges, Ernesto Sábato, José Feliciano, and Andrea Bocelli are very influential in encouraging this recognition.

Another development that has made the world more accessible just in the last decades is the advent of digital audio-reading technology. It creates the possibilities for true universal access to culture for the almost 300 million people in the world who are visually impaired.

## Legal Foundations of Transition

In 2007 the government of Chile ratified the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of

Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol (United Nations). Since then, Chile has strived to recognise and honour the human rights of people with disabilities. Article 19 establishes the right of "living independently and being included in the community." This calls for full inclusion of people with disability into society, being able to choose where and with whom to live, and having access to support services in their residences and in the community. Accordingly, Chile passed laws ensuring these rights (see Endnotes).

## Education for Transition

Transition as a curricular approach was first used in the 1980's in the United States. Transition applies to students with disabilities or special educational needs, who are close to the end of the formal education years. In Chile, as in much of Latin America, there are few supports for full inclusion in the community, and even fewer for inclusion in the workplace.

In transition work it is important to keep these human rights and principles of equal opportunity in mind: the right to education, independent living, quality of life, self-determination, family inclusion, and social inclusion.

The years of transition into the adult world are a fundamental period in the life of every individual, particularly for young people with disabilities. Jane Everson (1995) compares this transition work with the act of "crossing a river." The process should begin when the student is between 12 and 16 years, and create a long-term collaboration between the professional, the student, and the family.

In this period of education, students and their families explore professional development and community participation. All parties must understand the importance of self-determination, self-promotion, citizenship, and community service for the student. To support this learning, educators use team collaboration, problem resolution, curricular modifications, and positive behavior supports.

Personal autonomy is one of the most important aspects in our development as adults. For people with disabilities, it's necessary to accommodate their personal needs, but especially important to remember that the greatest obstacles and limiting conditions are created by their own society. With accommodations and assistance and social changes, these individuals have the capacity to enjoy an independent life.

Parents' participation is essential for success in the process of transition, and in the planning of individual programmes for adults with multiple educational needs and/or deafblindness.

All professionals working with students with disabilities should recognise that the

foundation for a successful transition begins at an early age. The curriculum must support the development of basic communicative skills for social interaction. Children need to engage in communication in natural contexts, which is why and participation in their communities is important. Independence is rooted in mastering independent mobility alternatives, skills of autonomous self-management, decision-making, empowerment, self-determination, and personal control and care. These abilities must be fostered from the early stages in life, and are vital in combating the alarmingly high percentage (71%) of unemployment among people with disabilities in Chile.

It is also noteworthy that the Chilean Ministry of Education is guided by the Universal Design for Learning, which supports educational access and participation for everyone. This is an inclusive approach to educational planning, removing all barriers that may impede learning or participation. This design accommodates people with multiple educational needs, including those with deaf-blindness, paving the way for their integration and inclusion in the world of adult life and jobs.

### **Adult Life Transition Team**

The Adult Life Transition Team is composed of the student, the family, professionals from multiple fields, and a teacher who facilitates the teamwork. All members are focused on assisting the youngster in the process of transition into adult life. Together they create an action

plan, assemble the array of services needed, and coordinate the required activities. The goal is to support the student's functional and academic performance.

In the United States, the school district is the first contact for implementing transition services. Through collaboration between the school and community agencies, the child starts receiving transition services at the age of sixteen, which are updated annually. From that time on, the student's formal education includes a focus on future employability and independent adult life options. This focus is "oriented towards results," in quantifiable terms that can be measured.

The student and the team partner to develop an Individualised Educational Program (IEP). The IEP outlines and prioritises the most important activities or strategies in the upcoming school year. At the end of each academic year, the team evaluates what has been accomplished, and refines the goals and strategies for the future. Among the things evaluated are current and future needs, emerging economies, changing interests. This individual-centered planning model focuses on the student. The teaching staff, the family, and the professional form an interdisciplinary team that supports the child's learning and development.

### **Role Of Educational Agencies and Other Agencies In Chile**

It is fortunate that Chile legally recognizes multiple disabilities and deafblindness as unique disabilities, but there is a need for a

better systematic coordination between Educational, Health, and Labor ministries. There is a particular need for counseling about pensions and civic responsibilities.

Educational law in Chile needs to include transition as part of the instruction for students with disability. Education is a complex task full of uncertainty, where the biggest challenge is to accommodate the diverse needs of the student body. Even when supported by regulations, our own experience, and the insight of colleagues, we are still left searching for solutions to the problem we encounter in the classroom. Even so, teachers need heuristic models for the complex situations encountered with students with multiple disabilities. Otherwise, there is no measurable progress or growth.

Every institution in Chile needs a team of teachers who can work together to create answers to the problems of transition into adult life. The teams draw upon their daily practice, analyzing themselves, the students' goals, and their strengths. The best response to diversity in educational needs will be paved with creative, contextualized solutions based on mutual collaboration.

In this context, the Ministry's best role will be that of facilitator, supporting the most appropriate level of autonomy in the management of centers, and promoting equality of opportunities. Because each institution, each teacher, and each student are unique, the elements of a specific educational programme will also be unique. At the same time, a comprehensive

approach must be established, so that families, students themselves, and the teaching staff participate as a team, deciding on the topics that are important for the education of one and all.

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### ENDNOTES

In 2006, Law N° 20.422 establishes:

Article 3: Independent Living: State allows a person to make choices, to act independently, participate actively in the community, in exercise of the right of free development of personality.

Article 4: "Programs intended to support people with disability ... must have as their objective improvement of life quality, mainly, through strengthening actions or promotion of relationships,

their personal development, self-determination, social inclusion and exercise of their rights (...) The State will prioritize the making of programs, projects and creation of supports in the closest environment of the people with disability which they are intended to benefit".

### Support Services, 2016 Offers – Chile

Additional support and continuity plan – Financing of personal assistants, transfer assistant and environmental adaptations to advantage inclusion of students from higher education.

Transition to Independent life Plan – Collective mode: Financing of support services and/or environmental adaptations given by an institution to people between 18 and 59 years.

Individual mode: Financing of personal assistant, transfer assistant and environment adaptations to advantage job performance of people between 18 and 59 years.

In Chile, the state resources are granted to people from 18 years. This is insufficient, because the transition to adulthood must start before that age.

# **Soft Skills and Transition to Adult Life: Preparing Young People with Disabilities for the World of Work**

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According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (undated), "Youth is best understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence." While most societies define youth as the period of life between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four, it may begin as early as the age of ten and extend to the age of thirty-two. It is difficult to define specifically, since it depends on physical, and psychological maturity, education, social relations, the possibility of joining the labor market, and the cultural criteria of a particular community.

What does not vary in each young person is the importance of self-determination—the ability to choose the future for him- or herself, led by personal, social, and occupational expectations. Self-determination is closely linked to the personal history of each person, as well as the societal perception of that person's status and abilities. These histories and forces begin their influences in childhood, through interaction with others in the family and community, and patterns of cultural, social, economic, and political life.

Successful transition promotes self-esteem, security, and active participation in

decision making. Fostering attitudes of cooperation through participation in social and community activities strengthens the awareness of belonging to groups. This supports the youth's occupational choice, and the sense of usefulness and self-esteem that arises from being a member of a family and society.

It is important to emphasise programs that prepare young people with disabilities for adult life in general. This transition education supports their entry into adulthood and autonomy, assisting them in defining their own projects and directions, in choosing appropriate supports, and achieving full participation in all spheres of society. Self-determination is central to these goals, and it must start at an early age, ideally as early as twelve years of age (Perkins International & FOAL, 2014).

However, many educational systems have focused on academic skills and have neglected skills for life and the world's current work demands. The Inter-American Development Bank (2012) in its study of employment in Latin America, finds that there is a very large gap between what is required by the labor market and the skills learned in high school.

Options for young people with disabilities are even more limited. There are social barriers, and a lack of access to education and training for work. They also encounter the misperception that they live in a prolonged childhood, with little support for personal performance as an adult. This arises not only from their youth, but from a number of social attitudes linked to biological, psychological, and social factors.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2008) states that, "States Parties shall enable persons with disabilities to learn life and social development skills to facilitate their full and equal participation in education and as members of the community." Further, nations should "enable persons with disabilities to have effective access to general technical and vocational guidance programs, placement services and vocational and continuing training."

In 2012, Costa Rica enacted laws to promote equal rights for persons with disabilities, supporting accommodations that enable them to participate on equal terms in inclusive and accessible environments. The National Plan for Employment for Persons with Disabilities has the goal of providing "full productive employment and work for all, including women and young people." (UNDP, 2012). This initiative is led by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, in conjunction with the International Labor Organization, United Nations Development Programme, and public and private institutions.

The objective of the National Plan for Employment of Persons with Disabilities is to improve "employability of people with disabilities through the management of processes of training, addressed to develop basic skills required for their participation in the labor market." In order to promote the training and formation of young people with disabilities, the Young Person Council and the National University of Costa Rica joined forces. Together, these agencies have developed training courses for basic skills related to the world of work (soft skills).

The soft skills include "knowledge of being" and the social and personal attributes required in a good work performance. These attributes require understanding the attitudes and behavior appropriate to the circumstances, making decisions, initiative, perseverance, self-confidence, assertive communication, interpersonal relations, teamwork, planning, organization, risk-taking, and commitment, among others.

The training participants acquire or strengthen self-knowledge, and learn to understand the world of work and its environment. They put their acquired knowledge in practice, and analyze their personal, social, and occupational performance. The training program is modular and uses the "person-centered" approach, with five programmatic axes: training, inclusive businesses, job placement, entrepreneurship and governance. The teaching style emphasises "collaborative learning," taking into account the characteristics of the group in general,

as well as the personal attributes and support needs of the participants.

*The program features five modules:*

**Module 1:** Who am I? What do I want? Where am I going?

**Specific objective:** Recognize myself as an adult person with rights, duties, and a life project.

**Module 2:** Who is around me and how I interact with them?

**Specific objective:** Relationship with my immediate environment.

**Module 3:** Do I know the labor world? What do I want to do? Do I have the skills to get and keep a job?

**Specific objective:** Linking me to the labor world.

**Module 4:** How do I perform in a job?

**Specific objective:** Serving effectively in the labor world.

**Module 5:** What have I learned? What have I changed? What is my action plan?

**Specific objective:** I reflect upon and use and analyze the knowledge and experience acquired to make decisions in the future.

The seven-course training program was developed by a team of five special educators who have worked at the National University of Costa Rica. Between 2013 and 2016, 180 people with a variety of physical, sensorial, intellectual and psychosocial disabilities have completed the program. They have succeeded in finding openings and internships in the labor market. This outcome has spurred the government to

expand this program into more regions in Costa Rica.

In November 2015, the Ministry of Culture and Youth of Costa Rica published a training document arising from the program, Formation by Related Skills or Competences Linked to the World of Work (Soft Skills) for Young People with Disabilities. This disseminates the transition training that has been successful supporting youth with disabilities who are embarking upon adult life.

As a personal conclusion...

All human beings have the right to define their own life project, in search of personal, social, and occupational fulfillment. Happiness is a right and it is achieved only if you have the possibility of making personal, social, and occupational decisions for yourself.

The transition to adult life is a process of vital importance. It is critical to form a supportive team that respects the young person's right to make decisions. No one learns and matures through signs or words only; life experiences and contact with reality are our best teachers in life.

Making occupational choices and having a productive work life requires actual occupational experiences. Experimenting, feeling, making mistakes, and persevering ... only in this way will young people have the opportunity to make the choices that are right for them.

Throughout life people consider many opportunities and experience various

transitional processes and challenges. The important thing is to have the tools that support making the right decisions according to the circumstances and the stage of life that is being lived.

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# First Independent Life Experience in a Group Home for Young Adults with Multiple Disabilities in Argentina

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In the article, we share our experiences since 2011, when we began developing a group home for young adults with deafblindness and multiple disabilities in Cordoba, Argentina.

The group home project started with identifying the need for transition services for young adults with multiple disabilities. Professionals within the field in Argentina, from Perkins International, and from Fundación ONCE para América Latina (FOAL) met with parents. This team produced a document on transition that has served as our guidebook (FOAL & Perkins International, 2013).

In establishing a group home, our first task was to clarify the objectives and principles guiding the implementation of services in transition to adult life. Argentinian provincial government authorities supported the project, and a formal agreement was signed between Perkins International and the Ministry of Social Development of the Province of Córdoba.

Our guidelines for the group home project were drawn from the United Nations

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2008). We incorporated fundamental aspects of the Convention, such as:

- Universal Design, which calls for designing environments, processes, services, instruments, devices, and tools so they are accessible to all.
- Social inclusion, full participation in educational, social, economic, political, and cultural life. This includes access to the labor market, education, information technologies, health systems, legal rights, social protection, and social security, all of which make possible a full life for everyone.

Our commitment to full accessibility and inclusion guided us as developed this project. Government agencies, FOAL, and Perkins International cooperated to train the various stakeholders in the municipalities and provincial agencies. This ensured that they understood transition concepts and the importance of collaborative teamwork. This foundational work supported our plan to create a

residence youth and adult with multiple disabilities, using the group home model. The project was a collaboration between the Undersecretariat for Comprehensive Protection of Children and Adolescents- Disability Division, FOAL, Sullai Civil Association, and Perkins International.

Among the community services available in our province are educational institutions, rehabilitation centers, therapeutic educational centers, day care centers, and adult centers. These providers support the preparation for adult life of people with disabilities, and a group home residence filled out the range of services. The residence gives continuity to the independent life process, creating the opportunity for these young people to use their skills in real and functional ways in their daily lives.

For adults with multiple disabilities, the ability to live outside the family fosters self-esteem and the empowerment of their own lives. This calls for collaborative teams that integrate the wishes of the young people, their families, personal support network, professionals, and members of the community.

The process of creating the group home was feasible because **training** was considered as one of the **fundamental pillars** for the sustainability of the project. This training was provided to:

- Authorities, to ensure the sustainability of the service;
- Staff of the residence, to provide a service appropriate to the needs of the residents and;

- Family members, to accompany the process as part of the collaborative team.

Another of the pillars that guaranteed the sustainability of the service is the cooperative work with the families. In order for families to be able to support the young women and their access to a life outside the family home, it is necessary to start on the path towards autonomy from a young age. The collaborative work between school and family is indispensable when fostering the interdependence and self-determination of each child or youth. This foundation assists the young people in adapting to their new home, with its increased independence and responsibilities.

*As a mom, I pushed myself, allowing my daughter to expand her bonds beyond the family from a young age ... with her first caregiver, with her schooling, and her participation in the adult center. It was a challenge for me to "step back" from my daughter. I had to overcome fears and trust in the possibility of her ability to bond with others. -- Aurea, mother of four children: Caro, Rupe, Juan Manuel and Victoria. Rupe was born 34 years ago with deafblindness and multiple disabilities.*

In Argentina, there is a great array of cultural differences between families' situations, motivated by geography, social and economic status, and religion, among other factors. This can include a variety of attitudes toward disability and a family member with a disability. Each family's

particular lifestyle influences the behavior of its members. Therefore, it is necessary to work as a team to design the best housing service for each young adult; each resident brings his or her own values, customs, and culture. In addition, each of them has unique needs, strengths, resources, and interests that should be considered when planning for life in his or her new home.

It is important for professionals to respect parents' need to maintain their identity as parents, welcoming them as participating members of the community. However, much of the stress experienced by parents of children with multiple disabilities is a result of physical exhaustion. They have had the responsibility of caring for their children 24 hours a day, year after year. This situation can cause them to lose perspective and neglect their own needs. The residence service allows the family, and parents in particular, to recover spaces and activities. In short, they can begin once again to enjoy being people with their own power of self-determination.

*As a family, since the birth of Rupe, we sought guidance for her education ... after having passed the medical stages we did not find adequate services. Because of this, in 1994 we founded a special school. As she grew older, services, an adult center, and a residence were also growing. The idea of a residence was born after a trip to the US where we could experience the post-school services that existed. Our greatest wish was for my daughter to be as independent as possible. We*

*managed to carry out a project that with the commitment of many people....*

-- **Aurea**

It took a lot of work and collaboration to organise, implement, and maintain the residence service. As we worked together, we developed guiding principles that helped us function as a team:

- Respond to the needs of users;
- Maintain coherence between what is proposed and what can be achieved; and
- Stay realistic about the organisational reality, with its micro and macro environment.

It is also necessary to define the roles, functions and responsibilities of those who are part of this service. The steering committee guides the decision-making processes, such as the administration of the residence and relations between stakeholders and team members.

The residence service is based on national and international regulations; Argentine National Law No. 26378 was crafted in adherence to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of the United Nations. These guidelines are the basis for defining and regulating the residence, where young adults are considered citizens with rights respecting their self-determination. They have access to adaptations that contribute to their full social inclusion.

Under this philosophical and legal framework, we have created a residential service model centered on the residents,

offering to each of them an independent life experience. It is effective with the use of various supports, determined by the approach and methodology that each resident requires. The supports are both human, with a referent person who lives with the group, therapeutic supports, and assistants; and material, with use of technology and access adaptations.

After 6 years of operation, we have learned a great deal. As a team, we studied the theoretical aspects of independent living proposals created by different authors and organisations in other countries. These theories provided us with the foundation of the service creation project, and are reflected in our daily practice.

While the “group home” model is well known internationally, it is novel in our country. We needed to distinguish the group home from orphanages, which are the traditional model of group living in our community. In order to establish the uniqueness of the group home model, we emphasised:

- The individuality of the process (e.g., decision-making of young people about what they want for their lives, the activities they wish to do, etc.);
- The centrality of the families and their involvement in everyday actions;
- The characteristics of the group home are determined by the residents' desires, personal characteristics, and needs. For this reason, it is necessary to have skillful personnel that can interpret those desires and needs.

*More than two years ago, my daughter clearly stated that she did not want to continue attending the adult center where she participated ... we were able to interpret that nonverbal, gestural, corporal communication ... and now lives in the residence. She has an individualised programme, determined by her needs and interests. With the support of a caregiver she chooses to do activities such as swimming, walking, shopping, getting ice cream, and going out to her favorite places: McDonalds and the cinema, etc. – Auri*

We learned the importance of creating, as a collaborative team, a code of coexistence that involves all the actors: youth, families, coordinator and caregivers.

The role of coordinator is vital and was more clearly delineated with the passage of time. Today, after this 6-year process, its features and functions can be clearly indicated:

- Management knowledge to monitor the everyday functioning of the residence, the fulfillment of its mission, its methodology, and philosophical values;
- Promote the personal transition process – guiding residents to develop an adult life and participate in the community, according to their personal characteristics, interests and possibilities;
- Coordinate staff training related to the specific needs of the residents with deafblindness and multiple disability;

- Promote the communication and coordination of the team, with families, professionals, and members of the community;
- Manage, support, contain, conciliate, and guide, with an attitude of availability.

The caregivers who currently work in the service were carefully selected, with emphasis on their emotional stability and skills in encouraging activity, as well as:

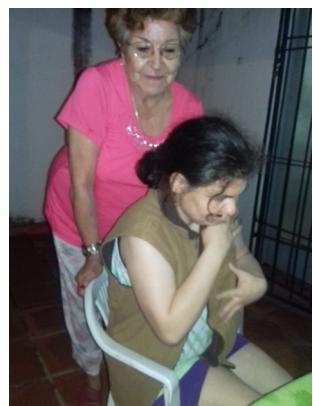
- Ability to create positive relationships with residents and families;
- Ability to “train in action.” The caregivers learn about the characteristics and needs of the young women as they came to know each other, living together daily and creating an emotional bond.

*“My daughter is happy and independent with the necessary supports” – Áurea*

*As a professional who works with young people, families and professionals on transition services, in diverse contexts and institutions of Argentina, I am guided by the words of colleagues who, speak of their experience in Spain: “We must bear in mind that we want to create a housing service will be a HOUSE, their house, for a specific group of people. For this reason we should not leave aside, but rather put first, the self-determination and active participation of the people who will live in that house, within their possibilities and with the necessary supports... we have to know their opinion about where they will live, who they will live with, and how they will live, in order to achieve a quality life for the person.” (FEAPS)*

*– Paula Rubiolo, Transition Consultant,  
Perkins International*

#### **Some pictures from our story and work:**



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# WE CAN LEARN !



**Visual Impairment is not an  
impediment to learning**

# Transition Training In East Africa: The Challenge

**Rose Ciesla**, Consultant, Perkins International, United States

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Transitions are challenging for everyone. This is particularly true for students with multiple disabilities and visual impairments who are moving from school to adult life in the community. In East Africa, the Seeing Is Believing project lessens the stress for these students and their families in Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya. Each of the countries hosted a three-day training programme for educators and families.

This programme was supported by Perkins International's transition project, and was funded by Standard Chartered Bank. The entire three-country training was to be completed in three weeks. Thus began the challenge for Perkins International's consultant in East Africa!

During the preparation phase of the Seeing Is Believing programme, we researched many publications. We found a Perkins School for the Blind publication that gave us a foundation for the project: Total Life Learning: Preparing for Transition--A Curriculum for All Students with Sensory Impairments. This curriculum explores different ways of assessing student skills that are necessary for their future development. The assessments focus on practical skills in many life areas, such as

work, communication, behavior, physical/motor skills, mobility skills, organisation, safety, finding work, money, and social/leisure skills.

During the Seeing Is Believing trainings, we drew upon these key areas of development. As trainers, families and educators, we worked together to develop a list of skills and expectations that was specific to each country, reflecting its unique cultural expectations. We found this process very valuable and productive, constantly asking ourselves why we are teaching what we teach, why we are assigning students a particular activity, and how this skill affects their future. This approach got everyone working together; thinking, discussing, and identifying skills that will prepare students for their adult lives.

We used the concept of Person-Centered Planning (also known as Personal Futures Planning) in our trainings. The participants worked in pairs to engage each other in practice interviews, followed by productive group discussions. This helped the trainees identify the challenges facing students with multiple disabilities, particularly in such interview settings.

Based on the concept that transition takes place throughout all our lives, the Perkins International staff gave participants a variety of interactive experiences and strategies. They learned how to effectively interview students and parents, how to brainstorm about the skills that students need for transition, and how to network with resource groups in their country. The skills they identified will be helpful for teachers and families when planning transitions with the students.

During the training, participants created country-specific informational booklets. They include all key areas of the expanded core curriculum, and list the practical life skills needed to be successful as adults. These lists can be used as a tool for assessment and collaboration. A number of partners assisted with the development of the booklets: CBM International, SENSE International, Rotary International, and the Ministries of Education and Health. These partner agencies conducted presentations on the resources available through their organisations, and a list of these resources were included in the booklets.

The participants created action plans for each school, incorporating the knowledge

and skills they gained from the training. They outlined complete transition planning programmes, and created plans to adapt the school and work environment for their students with visual impairment and deafblindness. Examples of work plans include carrying out home visits, taking the students to the market to use money, and using communication and mobility skills to connect the children with local resources. These action plans will go a long way to enhance the skills of teachers and the quality of instruction. The new approach will create support for the students and their families.

Perkins International staff found it deeply rewarding to work with the educators and families in the countries of Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya. Their enthusiasm for serving the young people with special needs was inspiring. We encountered a few challenges, and we were able to work them out together. The participants together created country-specific transition planning booklets that will expand and change along with the work and opportunities for students with multiple disabilities and visual impairments in Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya.

# **Sexual Abuse and Harassment of Visually Impaired girls in Dhaka city**

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**Rayhan ara Zaman**, Assistant Professor, IER, University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh.

## **Introduction**

Preparing for adult life is crucial as well as very important for everyone, students with visual impairment is not an exception. The transitional period which leads to adult life is called puberty when students specially girls students face different types of new experiences.

The article describes one of the puberty issues of female students with visual impairment which is sexual abuse and importance of sex education for them. A study was conducted in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh to explore the situation of sexual harassment and abuse of girls students with visual impairment considering Lesley's critique. It also aims to explore visually impaired girl's sexual orientation, their understanding and attitude towards sex. Causes of sexual abuse and harassment is also discussed in the context of Bangladesh. 30 visually impaired girls were purposively selected from Dhaka. Low vision (19) and total blind (11) girls, age ranging from 10 to 19 years were interviewed using a semi-structured interview schedule.

Lesley Chenoweth's, a feminist critique of disability described socialization of disabled woman as a two-way process; socialization

as a woman and again socialization as a disabled. Thus, they are victims of double discrimination: being a marginalized status by their disability and again through their gender (Chenoweth, 1993). Maqbool (2003) labeled visual impaired women as victim of triple discrimination: being women, poor and disabled. Aryal (2004) argued for a different set of models for analyzing the abuses against disabled women. His points is that sexual abuse against visually impaired adolescence girls should be viewed from two perspectives: the theories that deal with the general and the other with the theories of Feminist Critique of Disability (Aryal, 2004). The prevalent social attitude of viewing visually challenged as worthless, results in low self-esteem. They are denied opportunities of education and training, thus they are economically dependent. This economic dependency again lowers her dignity. This accusation is heightened by her physical vulnerability.

## **Need of sex education for the visually impaired girls**

Sex is considered a forbidden topic in Bangladesh. People here often discourage to talk on this topic, girls learn to remain silent in sex related violence and abuse because the society tends to blame the

victim. For this reason, no girl or women normally tell if she experience such types of violence. But, these incidents have a very deep psychological effect on the victim. Sexual harassment or rape related incidents can lead to frustration and improper development which affect her future life and hinders from success. Here comes the issue of sex education, means: equipped children and young people with the knowledge, skills and values to make responsible choices about their sexual and social relationships in their life. (Sidibé, M. 2013) According to Sidibé, M. (2013) it can be said that preparing children and young people for the transition to adulthood has always been one of humanity's great challenges, with human sexuality and relationship at its core. And to make this transition more smoother sex education can play a vital role. (Sidibé, M. 2013)

Children with visual impairments follow the same pattern of sexual development as sighted children and they need to receive the same information about sexuality. Vision plays a major role in concept development to fully understand about sexuality. Sighted children learn a great deal about sexuality through casual observation. But children with visual impairments cannot see the differences between boys' and girls' bodies, various body shapes and sizes, and pregnancy changes. They cannot observe these and other developmental changes over the life cycle. They may have limited knowledge of gender roles and fashions, male-female attractiveness factors, toileting practices, and appropriate displays of affection. Besides, visually impaired children

have limited access to the information their friends receive from television, movies, books, and magazines. So, they need proper sex education to prepare themselves for future life. (Davies, J., 1996) Parents, teachers and friends have important roles on orienting visual impaired students with sexual development and relationships. (Davies, J., 1996)

In the report of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics census 2011, it was found that approximately 14 million people with disability are in Bangladesh among them a large number of are women. CSID (2002) reported that women with disabilities in Bangladesh appear to be at high risk for emotional, physical, and sexual harassment. In their study the prevalence of abuse of the girls and women with disabilities was 92%. Incidents of physical abuse are about 82% and cases of sexual abuses 32%. (CSID, 2002)

### **Findings and Discussion of the study**

The current study found that 28 respondents (out of 30) are familiar with sexual relationship. They came to know it from media (20%), family (8%), friends (70%) and text books (2%). The majority of those who responded to this felt that only knowing about sex is not enough to protect themselves from sexual harassment and abuse. 43% of those who were interviewed reported that they experienced rape incident in puberty. 29% of the participants said about sexual molestation when 22% reported about verbal sexual harassment. A minority of the participants (7%) indicated about incest report. 1 of the respondents

informed about harassment through technology. 2 of the respondents did not response to this question, technically avoided the topic they reported that they never experience such type of incidents. Concerns were expressed about sexual abuse and harassment as the rate of

incidents are increasing. Over half of the respondents emphasized on the importance of sex education.

Another important findings of the study was that majority of the victims are from lower and middle class families.

**Table 1 : Economic condition of the victims**

Economic Class	Lower Income Family (<10,000 / month)	Middle Income Family (<25,000 / month)	Higher Income Family (>25,000 / month)
No. of Victims	13	10	5
Not Victimized		1	1

Table 1 shows an overview of the economic condition of the visually impaired girls depending on their family income. As can be seen from the table above visually impaired girls from lower and middle income families reported sexual harassment significantly more than higher income family. Only 2 respondents never face that kind of sexual problems. Both are from middle and higher income families. Poverty is indicated one of the major causes of sexual violence by 30% of the participants. It is also parallel to the comments of Petersilia (2001) that there is a strong relationship among disability, poverty and abuse. (p. 655-694)

Blindness is a key factor of sexual violence reported by 90% of the respondents. Perpetrators want to take the advantage of their blindness. They think due to their disability visual impaired girls will be unable to identify the person. Even blind girls are more vulnerable than low vision girls.

Gender discrimination and lack of values and ethics are identified another two factors for sexual harassment. Visual impaired girls dependency on others has a significant impact on sexual abuse and rape. They easily trust others. As a result of this rootless trust sometimes they victimized of rape incidents.

**Table 2 : Identification of perpetrators**

Type of perpetrators	Total Blind N=9	Percentage	Low Vision N=15	Percentage
Known	8	89%	8	53%
Unknown	1	11%	7	47%

Looking at table 2 it is apparent that total blind girls are victimized more than the low vision, because of their severity. This is also supported by UNICEF, 2014. Most of the time perpetrators are known. They are family members, relatives, friends and neighbors.

Even the researchers found that the victimized visually impaired girls did not share the incident with others. A possible explanation for this shame and fear. One third of the respondents were courageous enough to take remedial steps to protect themselves from the perpetrator.

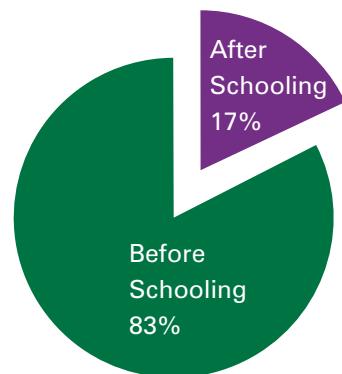
This result can be explained by the fact that visually impaired girls don't know what to do after these kinds of violence. They already felt deprived for their disability, they become afraid to be more deprived and victimized for being sexually abused. This rather disappointing result may be related to family dignity; parents and family members also tend to hide the violence to avoid social stigma which intends to blame the victim.

Another important finding of the study is that visually impaired girls (90%) think they are more vulnerable than their sighted peers for their impairment. They added that adolescent visual impaired girls are more prone to be victimized for their shyness, fear and ignorance.

In figure 1, there is a clear evidence of decreasing sexual harassment for schooling. 83% participants offered evidence of sexual harassment before schooling, when only 17% reported after

schooling. The result is similar with the findings of a study which showed 56% of the rape victims were illiterate. (Sakshi, 1997)

**Figure 1:**  
**Relation between schooling and sexual abuse**



The current study found that half of the respondents don't know about the law and punishment against sexual violence. Another important finding is that, the respondents who heard about the law, only know that it is punishable. None of them know nothing details about the law and what to do for getting the advantage of this law.

The striking finding about the law is that it is based on visual identification of the perpetrator. Though, the visually impaired victim raised her voice, most of the time she cannot identify the perpetrator for her limited vision. Perpetrator took the advantage and remain safe.

These results confirm the need of sex education for adolescent visual impaired girls. They need to learn the difference of good and bad touch, learn to be more independent, learn to raise voice against violence and learn about the preventive measures and protective laws.

## Conclusion

In our culture, girls have been always taught to be polite, submissive and silent. Boys are always encouraged to be heroic and powerful. This different process of socialization produces different sets of ruling style, which later make men into "oppressor" and women into "oppressed". So for Bangladesh patriarchy is the inherent cause of sexual violence against women. With this Chenoweth (1993) expressed that, it is believed that women with disabilities should be grateful for any sexual advances made to them because they are so unattractive. Besides this, in Bangladesh virginity and celibacy of women is highly valued. It also believes that a girl should be in protection of father; after she marries; she should be in control of her husband; if she becomes a widow; even then she should remain in control of her son. But in reality, the paper argues that they need more care, security and education to secure themselves from all type of sexual violence and harassment. This paper has suggested that it is high time to break down all these social taboos for decreasing sexual violence and harassment toward visual impaired women in Bangladesh.

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# ICEVI Fact Sheet

## Mission

In recognition of the continuing global challenges in achieving access to quality education for the millions of out-of-school children with blindness and partial sight, the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI) is a membership organisation with a mission to promote access to inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all people with visual impairment.

## Goals

**Goal 1** : Promoting access to quality education for people with visual impairment including those with blindness, partial sight, deafblindness and additional disabilities.

**Goal 2** : Influencing governments' and relevant stakeholders' implementation of the SDGs and UNCRPD in the area of education of people with visual impairment.

**Goal 3** : Improving networking, information sharing and collaboration at national, regional and global levels.

## History of the Organization

Founded in 1952 in the Netherlands, the ICEVI conducted its Golden Jubilee conference in the Netherlands from 28 July to 2 August 2002.

## ICEVI Regions

The 7 regions of ICEVI and their coverage of countries are as follows:

Africa Region	:	52 countries
East Asia Region	:	19 countries
Europe Region	:	49 countries
Latin America Region	:	19 countries
North America and the Caribbean Region	:	15 countries
Pacific Region	:	15 countries
West Asia Region	:	25 countries

Currently, more than 4000 individuals and organizations in over 180 countries are actively involved in ICEVI.

## Networking with other organizations

ICEVI works closely with International Non-Governmental Development Organizations (INGDOs) and UN bodies such as United Nations Economic and Social Council (UN-ECSOC), UNESCO, UNICEF, and WHO.

## Publications

ICEVI's biannual magazine "The Educator" is available in electronic version in both English and Spanish and is also posted on our website [www.icevi.org](http://www.icevi.org). ICEVI also publishes a biannual electronic newsletter that is currently distributed to more than 4000 individuals and organizations.

## Website of ICEVI

[www.icevi.org](http://www.icevi.org)

## Current International Partner Members of ICEVI

(Those who pay an annual subscription of US\$ 20,000)



**CBM**  
[www.cbm.org](http://www.cbm.org)



**Light for the World**  
[www.light-for-the-world.org](http://www.light-for-the-world.org)



**ONCE**  
[www.once.es](http://www.once.es)



**Perkins School for the Blind**  
[www.perkins.org](http://www.perkins.org)



Royal Institute for  
Deaf and Blind Children

Royal Institute for  
Deaf and Blind Children  
[www.ridbc.org.au](http://www.ridbc.org.au)



**RNIB**  
**Royal National Institute of Blind People**  
[www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)



**Sightsavers**  
[www.sightsavers.org](http://www.sightsavers.org)



The Norwegian Association of the  
Blind and Partially Sighted

The Norwegian Association of the  
Blind and Partially Sighted  
[www.blindeforbundet.no](http://www.blindeforbundet.no)



**Visio**  
**Royal Dutch Visio**  
[www.visio.org](http://www.visio.org)

## Current Organisational Members of ICEVI

(Those who pay an annual contribution of US \$ 100 to US \$ 750  
depending on their annual budget)

- **Overbrook School for the Blind**  
[www.obs.org](http://www.obs.org)
- **Lions Clubs International Foundation**  
[www.lcif.org](http://www.lcif.org)
- **LES DOIGTS QUI REVENT (Typhlo & Tactus)**  
[www.tactus.org](http://www.tactus.org)
- **Round Table on Information Access for People with Print Disabilities**  
[www.printdisability.org](http://www.printdisability.org)

# Global Campaign on Education For All Children with Visual Impairment (EFA-VI) Participating Countries

