

The Educator



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TEACHER TRAINING



A Publication of



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People with Visual Impairment**

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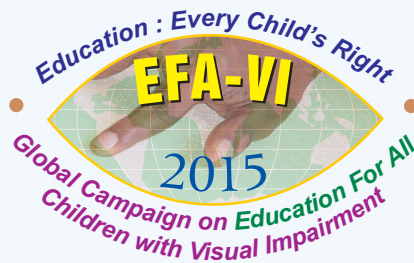
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Education For All children with Visual Impairment (EFA-VI) Global Campaign

The Education for All Children with Visual Impairment (EFA-VI) is a Global Campaign and programme of the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI) acting in partnership with the World Blind Union (WBU) to ensure that all girls and boys with blindness and low vision enjoy the right to education.

The Campaign, launched on July 16, 2006 is focusing on children in the developing world where currently it is estimated that less than ten-percent have access to education.

Highlights of the Campaign

- + Addresses three key Millennium Development Goals: -achieving universal primary education, -promoting gender equality and -developing global partnerships for development.
- + Stresses the right to education as emphasised in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- + Works within the framework of the general and special education systems.
- + Focuses on awareness and demand creation for education of children with visual impairment.
- + Stresses on the provision of appropriate support in educational settings.
- + Capacity building of teachers and others, development of literature, production of assistive devices and operational research are important elements.

Indicators of success

- + increased enrolment rates,
- + reduced dropout rates,
- + improved access to support services, and
- + educational achievement for children with visual impairment, on par with non-disabled children.



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



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Our International Partners





Message from **The President**

First of all, can I say a big thank you to Aubrey Webson, our editor, and his team at Perkins who do such a fine job of editing our journal for us. I think as you read this issue you will see just what a fine job they do. You will see what a huge amount of knowledge and experience they bring to the field, and it is wonderful that they are so willing to share it with us. I hope very much that you who read and use the journal will take up Aubrey's invitation to share your knowledge and experience too.

I am very sorry that some health issues have meant that I have had to engage with ICEVI to some extent by remote control over the last few months, and I'm afraid that this is likely to continue for a few months more. I had to miss the SPEVI conference in New Zealand in January which by all accounts was a great success, and I shall also miss the West Asia regional conference which is being held in conjunction with Deafblind International in Ahmedabad, India next month, which is also looking very enticing. But my greatest disappointment of all was missing the joint ICEVI-WBU Assembly in Bangkok last November. This was a ground-breaking initiative, and when I gave my apologies I told people I was having to cry off from what was probably the most important conference of my life. Fortunately, my absence can only have enhanced its success, as reports reaching me made clear that everything went off extremely well. Evaluations have been overwhelmingly positive, and you will be pleased to learn that the Executive has agreed in principle to repeat this success for our next Assembly in 2016. But inevitably some things went better than others and it is clear that people would like to take the opportunity to change some emphases and make a few improvements. We need to have reached a view about the format of the next Assembly by June this year in order to be able to fit in with WBU's timetable for decision making. The next E- News which goes out in April will carry a short questionnaire to give those who attended last year the opportunity to give us their views on changes they would like to see, so please make a point of completing and returning this to the secretariat

so that we are in possession of the views of as many of you as possible in advance of our discussions with WBU.

The final Saturday of the Assembly was devoted to an EFA-VI strategy day designed to help take our EFA-VI (Education for All Visually Impaired Children) Campaign to the next stage. One point to emerge was that we need to work with broader organisations in the fields of education and disability in order to get our message across. Some people worried that meant we were about to turn ourselves into a cross-disability organisation, but the Executive was quite clear, when it met in London in February that, though we want to work more closely with such organisations, there is no question of our turning ourselves into one of them. Our expertise lies in the field of visual impairment and that needs to remain our central focus.

The strategy meeting accepted a new EFA-VI Strategy and made numerous suggestions as to how it should be turned into an implementation plan.

I presented the revised strategy to former UK Premier and UN Secretary-General's Education Envoy Gordon Brown, and he asked that we develop it to highlight the role of technology in enabling visually impaired children to sit alongside their sighted peers in the same school. He felt this was a vision he could help us sell to big technology companies like Apple, Google and Microsoft, as well as the World Bank, the Global Partnership on Education and so on. The Strategy is now being fine-tuned to take account of this emphasis with the help of Stephen King, President of the DAISY Consortium, for re-presentation to Mr. Brown.

At our previous streamlined Assembly in London at the end of 2010, a number of committees were established to take the EFA-VI campaign forward, but I think it was the general consensus that these committees had not worked very well. The Executive at its latest meeting in London this February therefore decided to disband the committees and reinstate the Global Task Force which had been responsible for getting EFA-VI off the ground in the first place for driving forward the Strategy

Implementation Plan. It will include all our INGDO partners, as well as a couple of regional chairpersons together with the President and the CEO. It is felt that this will give our international partners much greater ownership of the campaign, and the first meeting of the new Task Force will be in Madrid on 31 May and 1 June. We are greatly indebted to our colleagues in ONCE for generously offering to host the meeting.

Finally, in my latest message for the E - News I referred to the part that ICEVI was playing in the discussions leading up to the replacement of the Millennium Development Goals with a new framework when they run out in 2015. We are working closely with our colleagues in the World Blind Union (WBU) and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) in the Vision Alliance to contribute to the many discussion groups which are flourishing on the internet around what is to happen post-2015, and this is a splendid example of collaboration across the sector. Speaking together, we feel that we can speak with a louder as well as a more united voice. But the internet is

really a tower of babel and it is hard for any one voice to come through. So as I write I am pulling together a group of Parliamentarians in the UK, with support across the sector, to seek a meeting with David Cameron, the UK Prime Minister, to put the case for a higher profile for disability in the post-2015 framework. Disability did not get a mention at all in the previous set of Millennium Development Goals. David Cameron is one of the three Co-Chairs of the High Level Panel which is making recommendations to the UN's Secretary-General on what should be in the new framework post-2015, so we have a unique opportunity to influence the thinking of the group here in the UK. We have every reason to believe that he is sympathetic, but there is no harm in stiffening his resolve for all the horse-trading which is bound to take place as the process comes down to the wire.



Colin Low
President, ICEVI



Message from **The Editor**

Another year closes; with the many excitements, challenges, and dare I say, changes, which came the way of all of us. It is practice for many to use the opportunity to stop and reflect on the joys and even the sorrows that came our way. We join you in this reflection as we take our thoughts back to the many events of the year.

We cannot help but think of the excitement of the world assemblies in November, where we saw new leadership within the World Blind Union, and some changes within our own organisation, The International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI). A few new regional officers joined the ranks, and we were able to measure success in the progress of our work through the Education for All programme.

At the world assembly, we had the opportunity to join hands and hearts as we remembered some of the leaders of our field who left us in the last quadrennial. May we, the readers of *The Educator*, join with all in this remembrance of the events of the past year.

The morning of the new year is upon us, and we all think of the renewal of hope that it brings. We at *The Educator* want to wish all our readers a wonderful season and prosperous New Year, and to say how much we enjoyed working with and serving you this year. Permit me to indulge; I want to thank my entire team at Perkins for working along with me in the production of this journal, and to wish all of them a wonderful and peaceful New Year ahead.

When we started this journey a year ago, we asked for your assistance to help us to make this journal not only a document of the ICEVI council, but to make it your journal by sharing information to all about your wonderful work. On this journey thus far, our themes have moved from research in visual impairment, to the future of braille, to innovations in personnel preparation. We have enjoyed learning from colleagues from around the world, including friends from small schools and parent programmes to international NGOs. I encourage you to continue this sharing. We would like to hear from more of you. We would like to learn and share more of your experiences.

In this issue, we are sharing information on the many ways to prepare teachers and personnel in our field. This is the first of a series of issues on this theme, and we hope many readers from around the world will join and share their experiences.

Share Your Experience and Expertise!

In this first issue of the theme of “*teacher training*” we have started with experiences learned from Perkins International from across the world. We will read of the experiences in Latin America, Asia, Eurasia, and from colleagues at Perkins in Watertown who have spent years working with programmes in Asia. While this issue focuses on the Perkins experience, we invite you to provide us with your information. We want to learn from and share the experiences in other parts of the world. Many colleagues are doing significant work that we have not heard of, and from which we can all benefit. The story of each programme has a lesson to share and methods to learn from in the education of each child, and in the development of services.

It will be wonderful in the coming issues to learn of your experiences in preparing teachers to be challenged by the new focus on inclusive education, universal design, transition planning, consultant educators, social inclusion or early intervention and multi disability services. We are all preparing personnel for all of these challenges in a new and dynamic changing world. We are working with new tools such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and changing national policies.

As our community works to include disability as a major focus of the next set of Millennium Development

Goals (MDGs), we are calling for concerns of persons with disabilities to be placed on the front burner. This is a goal for which we all strive, and our commitment to the rights of “every child” must be foremost in mind as we advocate for change and for inclusion. We would especially like to hear and share more information about teaching new and inclusive definitions of literacy that embrace the abilities of all. The global approaches to services through the new Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) guidelines is another area of development and work where lots of training is taking place. Finally, there remains a great need for more research on the impact of inclusive education, further training in the testing of children with low vision, and the many newer causes of visual impairment.

The interrelationship of our globe is stronger through the connectivity that technology and communication allows today. Using *The Educator* as our tool to connect the community, we want to share your experiences. To be involved, we need to hear from you and to receive articles describing your work, your successes, and what you learned from less successful experiments.

In this issue you will find an update from the ICEVI leadership about the recently concluded meetings in Thailand. Our ICEVI President will update you on the progress of the work in the Education for All VI programme in Africa. You will learn of the upcoming meeting of the executive committee scheduled for the UK in February, and the Asia conference scheduled for April 2013.

I hope that you will find this issue stimulating and informative and a springboard to inspire information sharing on various aspects of training.

In conclusion, I am truly excited about going into the New Year, with the hope and freshness that spring brings. I love this time of the year as it allows for reflection and yet renewal.

Thank you for the year and the experience we had. Thank you for sharing, and again, we look forward to the hope of the New Year.

Dr. W. Aubrey Webson

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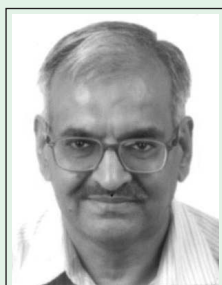
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WBU-ICEVI 2012

November 8-18, 2012
Bangkok, Thailand

The Memorable WBU-ICEVI Joint Event

The historic joint event of the World Blind Union (WBU) and the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI) was held in Bangkok, Thailand in November 2012. It was well attended by delegates of both the organizations and the Joint Assemblies gave tremendous opportunities for the delegates to come together to discuss the current status of educational services for persons with visual impairment and formulate strategies for the way forward. The WBU-ICEVI joint days attracted the largest number of participants and the sessions were found useful.

A strategy day to discuss the Global Campaign on Education for all children with visual impairment (EFA-VI) brought together global stakeholders to review the current status of the campaign and also to formulate strategies to expand the campaign to more countries. The day-long deliberations resulted in the following broad recommendations which will be reviewed by ICEVI and WBU in the days to come.

1. There is a need to come up with a catchy tagline for the campaign similar to the one used in Vision 2020 initiatives.
2. The campaign should fix a target to achieve in the next 10 years and work towards that goal and resources should be generated accordingly.
3. ICEVI should work with mainstream organisations involved in education for all movements so that the EFA-VI campaign becomes an integral part of such initiatives.
4. In terms of advocacy, the campaign needs to address education for all children with disabilities and in terms of intervention it may focus on children with visual impairment. This approach is pertinent to establish effective collaboration with broader initiatives on education.

5. UNESCO and UNICEF are interested in getting technical inputs on disabilities and ICEVI should take active role in providing such inputs at the national, regional and global levels.
6. Though ICEVI may work with a few focus countries in each region in order to create models and formulate strategies, the campaign should be advocated in more countries in order to reach out to the unreached children with visual impairment.
7. ICEVI needs to promote country level resource centres and such centres may be an existing centre run either by the Government bodies or reputed NGOs.
8. The Vision Alliance concept should be nurtured at the national level and in this context, proper interaction between the regional chairs of ICEVI, IAPB and WBU should be facilitated.
9. The work of the campaign should be linked to the websites of INGDOs and other international organisations in order to increase its visibility.
10. Active involvement of INGDOs in each region should be enlisted for joint advocacy, human resource development, and resource support for the campaign activities.
11. Strategies should be worked out for the active involvement of ICEVI in the Beyond 2015 initiative.
12. The organisations of the blind and parents should be actively involved in the campaign and the national activities should include them as important stakeholders.

The joint event was a great experience and both WBU and ICEVI will be discussing the strengths and shortcomings of the event to take further decisions on similar events in the future. Kudos to the Thailand Association of the Blind for their significant contribution in making this joint event a memorable one. More information on the way forward will be posted on the websites of both ICEVI and WBU.

Transition Planning Asia: Preparing Youth who are Blind or Visually Impaired with Multiple Disabilities for Adult Life

Charlotte Cushman, Project Manager, Perkins School for the Blind, USA



Transition Planning Asia <http://www.transitionplanningasia.org/> is a new website, designed to be a practical resource for teachers, rehabilitation workers, parents, and youth. The site offers an online forum for conducting discussion and sharing questions, concerns, and lessons learned in facilitating successful transition outcomes for students with multiple disabilities and visual impairment. The interactive features allow users to post case studies, functional activities, examples of transition programs, planning tools, and other resources from around the Asia Region.

Transition Planning Asia is a collaboration between Perkins International and its partners in Asia, ten countries where the organisations have been working to support transition activities. These countries are Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam. While the original site is in English, there are resources and activities in Asian languages. In addition, there is a built-in translation feature for 14 Asian languages.

Transition refers to the preparation for and the move from school or childhood into adult life. It includes participation in vocational and social activities, and being an active member of the community in which one lives. Because many of the youth in the region do not attend school, transition is broadly interpreted to mean increased engagement in the community as an adult. Given the limited resources in many developing countries, this site serves as a potential model for sharing information at great distances. Some of the site's users may have had formal training as teachers or rehabilitation workers, but others will rely on tools such as those built into the site to learn more about the topic of transition.

The site is divided into seven content areas:

Transition

Here users will find an overview of the process for creating a successful and happy life as an adult. Included are tools and examples of plans, and information about the preparation, planning, and personnel needed to begin a successful transition.

Personal Futures Planning

This explores a useful process for planning the next stage of an individual's life. Typically the team includes a person's family and teacher or rehabilitation worker, as well as friends, neighbors, and people of significance in the individual's life. They gather together with the target-person to focus on future plans, with an emphasis on what the individual likes and what they can do, rather than on a pre-defined outcome. Included is an introductory video from Blind People's Association in India, called Making Dreams Real.

Transition Programmes

This section showcases a number of sample programmes in the Asia region. There are many different types of programmes for youth who are blind or visually impaired with additional disabilities. Some are in residential schools for the blind, while some are in ordinary schools with their sighted peers. Still others do not attend school and are served by Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) Services. There is no single type of programme that is best for all youth, and services will depend on what is available in a specific area.

Functional Activities

This section presents an overview and a template for creating functional activities in which many skills are taught through a single undertaking. In a cooking activity, for example, it is possible to work on math skills (counting, measuring, estimating, comparing), reading (recipe), writing (shopping list or experience story afterward), communication (making choices, naming ingredients), fine motor (grasp and release, opening and closing containers, stirring, increasing finger and hand strength), social skills, daily living skills, and more. Other examples include making cookies, purchasing snacks, packaging snacks, and a visit to the post office. These activities are often a good place for teachers or parents to begin, and are suitable for young children as well as teenagers. This is one of the areas in which users are invited to submit content and can post their own ideas for functional activities.

Case Studies

Users can read about and share their own accounts of transitions, including problems, frustrations, and triumphs. Young adults, parents, and teachers are encouraged to share their experiences.

Resources

This section offers a rich collection of online books, information, courses, and links to agencies that assist with transition.

Forum

This is an interactive section that invites parents and educators to communicate and share advice and experiences.

For those wishing to learn more about the site, there is a webinar available free of charge on the Perkins website at: <http://www.perkins.org/resources/webinars/>

Collaborating for Inclusion in Public Schools: A Shared Work in Public Schools

Ana Lucia Pascali Rago, Physiotherapist, Psychoeducator, & Team Coordinator,
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Introduction

In this article we aim to share our experiences in developing a partnership between educational and health personnel in São Paulo State, Brazil. This collaboration supports the responsible inclusion of children with visual impairment and multiple disabilities in regular schools.

The team of the Low Vision Session of Santa Casa Hospital in São Paulo (Eva Lindstedt Centre) has partnered with Perkins International, Lavelle Fund, and Fundación ONCE para América Latina (FOAL). With this support we have been able to provide training for educators in public schools. We show them how inclusion is possible, and that all children can learn when we understand their needs and create appropriate teaching strategies.

Sharing the Experience

The Low Vision Session of Santa Casa Hospital in São Paulo (Eva Lindstedt Centre) is a service that offers treatment to people with visual impairment without cost to the patients. Our mission is to provide clinical and rehabilitation care to babies, children, youth, adults and the elderly with low vision, with or without additional disabilities. Our main goals are:

- Early intervention and early childhood education;
- Supporting families of children with low vision, including those with additional disabilities;
- Supporting the inclusion of children in regular schools;
- Spreading knowledge about visual impairment and multiple disability, and fostering the creation of new services in those areas.

After many years of working with those children and their families, and promoting their inclusion in public schools, we realised that we had to build partnerships with the teachers, schools and local governments. We needed to build trust and communication in order to create a team that could deliver inclusive educational service. We always had in mind that the health services should work together with the educational services, so we could exchange experience and knowledge in creating reasonable solutions.

We created collaboration and supported inclusion mainly in three ways: by strengthening the child, strengthening the family, and strengthening the school. We focused particularly on the general education teacher working with the child with special needs in an inclusive classroom.

When we talked with the educators and administrators in community schools, we realised that they are extremely apprehensive about inclusion. During our meetings they expressed fear, frustration, and feelings of incompetence. Since they are not trained to meet the needs of

children with visual impairments and multiple disabilities, they do not know what to do or where to start. Because many teachers and administrators don't understand how those children interact, communicate, and learn, it has been common to see schools that merely promote social inclusion, with no expectations concerning academic learning.

To address this, we decided to start with training for the educators of public schools in two ways: providing seminars and going to the schools.

Providing Seminars

The first step in providing seminars is creating partnerships with the local governments of the cities and states. We outline the goals of the project and its seminars, specify the topics we will present, and clarify that the seminar is supported by Lavelle, FOAL and Perkins International, and will have no cost for the government. We do ask the government entity to provide a place for the meetings, and to convene the educators. We include teachers of inclusive general education classrooms, special education teachers, coordinators, and school directors.

For the content of the seminars, we work with some basic subjects:

- How the visual system works;
- The main pathologies that cause low vision and multiple disabilities;
- Child development;
- The learning process;
- The importance of sight in learning, which allows us to get details and, at the same time, gives us the whole picture very quickly;
- Hearing, which allows us to interact and communicate;
- Sensory-motor experience and its role in learning.

We ask the participants to picture a child with no disability, two or three years old, for example, and what she/he would be doing if she/he were here. Then we ask them to compare this with a child with multiple disabilities. How many experiences is this child barred from, not having the opportunity to participate in fully?

We have learned that the best teaching strategy in these seminars avoids technical terms and offers concrete examples in the form of case studies. The seminar presenters listen to the participants attentively and try to clarify their questions. This creates an atmosphere where they can feel confident to express their doubts and anxieties. We show pictures and videos that feature the child communicating and engaged in classroom activities with appropriate adaptations. The participants can see and discuss different responses and behaviours and examples of how to deal with them.

We emphasise that building a collaborative team is essential for the success of the responsible inclusion. A strong collaborative team includes the general education teacher, special education teacher, health professionals, school coordinator, government representative, and family. This team allows the members to share their doubts, anxieties, difficulties, needs, knowledge, ideas, and solutions.

It is very important to emphasise that work with parents is very helpful. They are great partners, and they have to be part of the collaborative team. Parents know the children better than anybody else, and they can teach educators how to communicate with them. They can help with the adaptation of materials, and guide teachers in selecting goals for the individualised educational program. Their thoughts and feelings, more than any other team members, are focused on their children. Parents' participation in the collaborative team makes them more confident and competent.

When we invite parents to the collaborative team, we emphasise that inclusion begins at home with the family. We have meetings with parents to ensure they understand the nature of visual impairment and multiple disabilities, and the impact of those conditions on a child's development and learning. We talk about the child's needs and the family's desires, expectations and fears.

During the years we have been providing these seminars, we have paid attention to which teaching strategies work better for the trainings. Based on our observations and the answers on participant questionnaires created by Perkins, we can change strategies and adjust the curriculum to best meet the needs and questions of the educators. Our intention is to make the seminars as practical and useful as possible for the educators. We really want them to come away from the experience knowing these things:

- Responsible inclusion is possible, and that sometimes the process is easier than they can imagine, especially when they can work with a collaborative team.
- It is possible to understand the behaviours and needs of the children;
- There are many simple strategies and adaptations that make materials, activities and the environment accessible.
- The collaborative team will work together to find strategies and solutions, and will make the teachers (and everybody else) more comfortable and confident, prepared to work with the child.

Going to the Schools

By going to the schools, we get to know their daily routines and how things happen inside the classroom. It's an essential part of building the collaborative teams that integrate teacher practices and meet the child's needs for curriculum alignment, teaching strategies, daily routine and social skills.

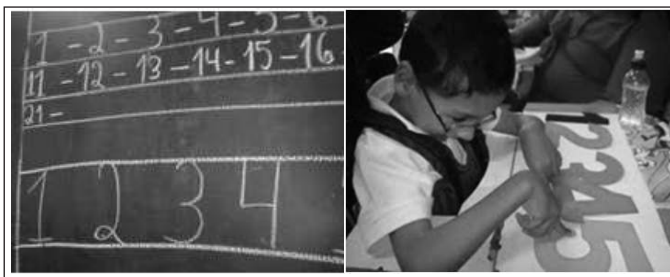
We have met teachers and coordinators that initially did not believe that children with multiple disabilities could learn. As we worked with them, they started to believe that these children can succeed—we need only to understand how they learn, and which strategies and materials are appropriate. Once convinced, the schools start setting academic goals for students with visual impairment and multiple disabilities.

Experience has shown us that is very important to get the school coordinator and director involved with the inclusion. Otherwise, a teacher who believes in the child's abilities feels alone and without enough competence and power to do this work. When the whole school community believes and gets involved with inclusion it is easier to succeed.

Because the school staff and the families rely on us, it is essential to show that we are there to help each other and find solutions together. We want and believe in partnership.



BEFORE: child working with an inappropriate material and strategy. The teacher just gave him the same activity as the other students and he had no assistance to do it. The result was a task with no function to him.

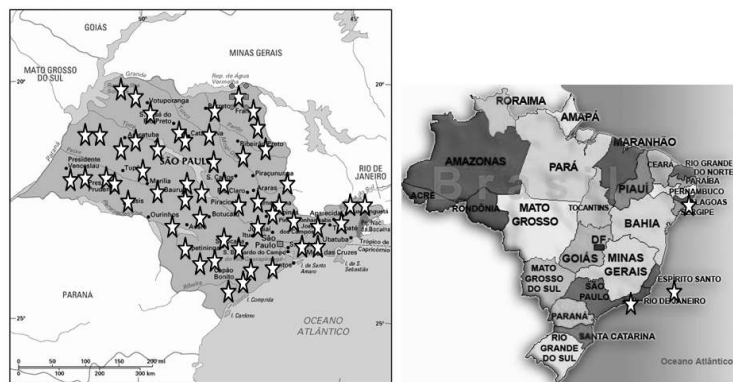


AFTER: teacher adapting activities and materials, and working with him with adequate strategies. The result is a task that he can really follow and learn with.

CONCLUSION

In our seminars we have trained around 1300 educators from public schools that serve children with visual impairment or multiple disabilities in their classrooms. Because we empower educators, the regional governments now seek out and welcome our seminars. We are proud that administrators realise that we really can help educators to create a responsible inclusion process, and give them the tools to communicate with and teach children with visual impairment and multiple disabilities.

The success of the seminars is very positive and now we are providing them to other Brazilian states, including 13 cities in Bahia, and Rio de Janeiro. The experience shared in this article was done basically in São Paulo State, where we started this project and where we conducted seminars in about 75 cities.



Around 75 cities reached in Sao Paulo State and now taking the seminars to other states of Brazil.

We have been able to confirm our hypothesis that the partnership and collaboration among health and educational areas is fundamental for responsible and successful inclusion. It is really possible to have a collaborative team, including different sectors of the educational process (government, family, general education teachers, coordinators, health professionals, and special education teachers), where everybody can benefit, especially the child.

We are especially thankful to Perkins International Program, Lavelle Fund and Fundación ONCE para America Latina (FOAL) for making this project possible, contributing to the improvement in inclusion of children with visual impairment and multiple disabilities in community schools in Brazil.

Translating the Belief in Possibility: Developing Educational Services, Supporting Families, and Training Mentor Teachers in China

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When Ellen Mazel, a teacher from Perkins International, arrived with an interpreter and three Chinese teachers at a rural village outside Nantong, China, the group was faced with an unusual challenge. Chen, a village boy who is blind, was eight years old but had not learned to speak. Ellen began by conversing with the teachers and Chen's family about the boy's daily routines and their goals for him. Ellen discovered that they had no expectation that Chen would ever learn to talk. They gave him very little exposure to speech. In fact, the other parents in the village viewed Chen's blindness as a sign of "bad luck" and forbade their children to play with him. He spent his days playing with bricks or out in the fields with the sheep.

Ellen knew that at Perkins School for the Blind in Watertown, Massachusetts, best practice would be to work with a team of specialists to develop an education plan including regular speech therapy. She also knew that such a plan would not translate to rural China. Instead, Ellen tapped into the strong sense of community in the village and mobilised the local people to schedule regular times to visit, sing, and talk with Chen. One neighbor readily volunteered for Monday afternoons, a local adolescent for Tuesday evenings, and others then eagerly competed for the remaining days of the week. Ellen's experience as a Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments told her that quite likely the boy had the potential to learn to talk. If his family was committed to teaching him and received guidance in effective methods to facilitate his language development, Chen's chances of speaking would be enhanced. If the townspeople followed their tutoring plan, Ellen knew success would follow.

Six months later, project director She Hongyu, from the non-profit Amity Foundation, a Perkins partner organisation in China, heard from Chen and his teachers. She reported what she called "heavenly" good news: "He now talks! He says quite a few words! He called me 'Jie Jie' (elder sister) on the phone, though I'm too old to be his sister."

Perkins International programmes operate in over 65 countries where efforts have been made to educate children who are visually impaired with additional disabilities, empowering and developing the capacity of schools, learning centers, teachers, and parents. The goal is to assist families and educators through training based on principles refined over the past 180 years of teaching children with visual impairment at Perkins School for the Blind. The work includes advocating with ministries of education, gaining the trust and commitment of school

administrators, encouraging family/professional partnerships, modeling successful practices with teachers, and training in-system mentors. We have found that working in this way fosters exponential growth in educational options for children with impaired sight, particularly those with additional challenges.

The lessons we have learned over the years can be distilled into these five essential principles:

1. All children can learn;
2. Family involvement and parent/educator partnership are crucial;
3. Establishing Quality Indicators is essential for demonstrating success;
4. Training mentors who in turn prepare more teachers paves the way for programme growth;
5. Inclusive education helps children who are blind participate in society.

All Children Can Learn

Perkins' work in China began by building a foundation with the Ministry of Education. During our initial trainings in Chinese schools in 2001, we saw that families and teachers, like those of Chen, typically did not believe that all children, especially those with multiple disabilities, can learn. Our first goal, then, was to demonstrate that learning is possible. The best, indeed, the only way to show that all children can learn is by allowing parents and teachers to see individual youngsters progressing. Working with children quickly revealed positive results to teachers and encouraged parents, which consequently drove demand for services. Stories of successes, child by child, spread quickly from parent to parent and we began to see changes in attitudes about learning potential, a potential made stronger with Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE).

On a systemic level, the number of preschool and multiple disability programmes at schools for the blind in China has grown. This is due, in part, to heightened expectations for preschoolers who have visual impairments or blindness and children who are visually impaired with multiple disabilities. The key was to work within the Chinese educational system. We built up teaching capacity through a series of systematic trainings that included a combination of both theory and practice. School administrators and teachers participated together, building a common understanding of programme goals and teaching methods.

From one programme in 2001, we established model programmes at six schools, and trained teachers of preschoolers and children with visual impairment and multiple disabilities. Training involved theory, demonstration, modeling, and practice implementing skills learned in training, with the support of skilled colleagues. The second phase of training expanded the focus to preparing local mentors – that is, training teachers to train others. The newly trained teachers brought the practices they learned back to their own communities, and trained more colleagues. The teachers themselves began to genuinely believe in the gifts locked within their students. Several teachers told us, “We thought our pupils couldn't learn. Now we realise that we simply did not know how to teach them.”

Starting with only one programme in 2001, by 2012 the number has grown to 33 ECCE, preschool, and multiple disability programmes in 16 cities.

Family Involvement

In addition to encouraging families and schools to reach for gains for all children, we have emphasised the value of schools partnering with parents. These partnerships develop parents' observational and teaching skills, confidence, and ability to train other parents. These families are effective advocates for the educational rights of children with visual impairments or blindness. Perkins' emphasis on parent training, family involvement, and parent educator partnership has resulted in family activities at nearly all of our partner schools. Whereas there had been minimal parental involvement in the past, parents now meet regularly to share both information and emotional support. Parents and teachers work together to develop individual learning plans for each child, based on priorities identified both at home and at school. As early childhood programmes have become established, we see many instances in which the very fact that teachers are visiting children with vision loss and their families helps the overall community understand the worth and learning potential inherent in every child.

We have found that modeling has been the best way to develop a parent/educator partnership. One of our attempts at getting parents involved was at the Chengdu School for Blind and Deaf Children. In 2003, we offered a weeklong workshop in providing services to preschoolers with visual impairments. In addition to the 20 to 25 teachers and school administrators, we invited a few families to our workshop sessions.

At the beginning of the week, the parents and grandparents sat toward the back of the room. When they offered their input, the Chinese professionals ignored them, talking amongst themselves. However, as the parents and grandparents gradually came to trust our care and interest, they began to sit closer and closer to the front of the room, openly sharing their concerns and their insights about their children, and taking in more information. In turn, as the Chinese teachers and administrators noticed our focus on these families and recognised the pertinence of the family members' questions and comments, the educators began to pay attention when families contributed. By the end of the week, all the educators participating in the training sat listening in rapt attention as a mother and grandmother made a moving presentation. There were few dry eyes in the room by the time they finished.

Though not every effort toward parent/educator partnership succeeds, most do. It is a logical progression: parents join in teacher training sessions, which fosters parent/educator partnership, which empowers families to initiate parent/teacher groups in their own schools. Before long, parents in neighboring cities are sharing their concerns, dreams, and hopes for their children; these parents then join together to give rise to a national association. For example, one of the parents from our workshop in Chengdu has become a full participant in services for children with visual impairments and blindness, presenting to professionals and other families in China and spearheading a national parents' organisation. In July 2006, Perkins International supported her attendance at an International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI) conference in Malaysia. There she networked with other parents and brought information back to China. She has subsequently played a leadership role with other families in forming parent/educator partnerships.

The success of this progression is very real. In Beijing in September 2009, eleven parents from Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, Guangzhou, Haikou, Dalian, Yantai, Yunnan, Shijiazhuang, Zhejiang and Chengdu gathered. They discussed parent advocacy efforts, partnering with educators, mutual support, and the formation of a National Parents Association. The following year, parents from 25 of the 30 provinces in China, representing both rural and urban areas, gathered in Beijing for their first National Parent Conference. During this conference, they formally established The China Committee for Parents of Individuals with Visual Impairment, and received formal government recognition. They have subsequently launched a website for parents of individuals with visual impairment.

Quality Indicators

Perkins International has worked with both teachers and administrators to help them articulate Quality Indicators in preschools and schools for the blind with programmes for children with multiple disabilities. Quality Indicators describe what a high quality programme serving these children looks like. The purpose of the Quality Indicators is to provide a tool for teacher self-reflection, to structure programme self-evaluation, and to guide consultation to programmes.

Borrowing from the Early Childhood Program Standards, Massachusetts Department of Education (2003), and based on several years of consulting to schools for the blind in China, we developed a draft document in 2004. Entitled Quality Indicators for Preschool Programs Serving Children with Visual Impairments/Blindness, the indicators in this document cluster around ten areas. Featured are the physical environment at the schools, child/teacher interactions, child assessment, staff training, family involvement, and programme evaluation.

The Chinese teachers worked with us for two years to revise and field test these Quality Indicators to produce a final version, with later addenda for children with multiple disabilities. Three years later, teachers of the Amity Foundation ECCE Project in Jiangsu Province worked with several leaders from Perkins International to develop an equivalent document for infants and toddlers with visual impairment, with the following clusters:

- Record keeping
- Interactions between visiting teacher and family
- Home teaching strategies
- Referrals/Outreach
- Programme resources
- Transition

Xianguang Peng, co-author of this article and Perkins partner, has been working with both well-established and newly forming programmes throughout China. These programmes serve children from pre-school through school age who have visual impairments, with or without additional disabilities. To aid those that are just starting out, Ms. Xianguang guided the teachers in selecting just ten of the Quality Indicators, basic understandings they could all agree upon. This criteria-building process was based on our earlier work together and the document first developed in 2004. It was then revised to create meaningful tools developed in-country by Chinese teachers, under the leadership of a Chinese administrator.

Training Mentors

Perkins International places a high value on building teacher capacity. We do this through developing the expertise of Chinese teachers so that they can, in turn, mentor other teachers. In June 2005, our formal work in training teacher mentors began with a weeklong training process in China. We identified three exceptional teachers and helped them develop skills in observation, interviewing, and examining school documents. This training enabled them to evaluate Chinese preschools based on Quality Indicators. The teachers learned to analyse information they had gathered, thereby discerning strengths and areas of need in the preschools. We guided them through the process of bridging from identifying strengths and needs to making specific programme recommendations. Lastly, we provided role-play practice in framing these recommendations so that the mentors' suggestions could be heard and embraced by the schools for which they were consulting.

A few days after the June 2005 training and implementation practice, the first three mentors visited and observed two schools for the blind in neighboring provinces. We accompanied them – only as guides – as they observed, questioned, and evaluated the programmes. The fledgling mentors met with one of the school principals just two days later to summarise programme strengths and areas of need and to suggest recommendations, all in Mandarin. As we looked on from the sidelines, with an English translator whispering to us, we realised that this consultation was already far more effective than any Westerners could provide. It was built on the knowledge and skills developed in the West, but interpreted and implemented between Chinese professionals, reflecting Chinese customs, bypassing barriers of language and culture.

That is not to say that our Chinese partners do not recognise our commonality. We shared with our colleagues the old adage about teaching people to fish: “Give me a fish, and you feed me for a day. Teach me to fish, and you feed me for a lifetime.” The Chinese, it turns out, have similar folklore, and they immediately smiled and nodded. In fact, they expanded the analogy to say that, indeed, we were teaching them to fish, so that they could in turn teach other Chinese teachers to fish, so that those teachers could then teach the young children who are blind to fish.

The original mentor training is now in its third cycle with mentor teachers traveling to new partner schools to train more new educators. Furthermore, the mentor training has been expanded to include a similar process for ECCE services, mirroring what is taking place in the schools. These mentor teachers provide coaching, feedback, and support to new teachers as they practice implementing skills learned in trainings and through on-the-job experiences. We are currently collaborating on the next step, which involves working with mentor teachers to publish their own training materials. These materials incorporate Chinese culture and values and foster mentorship in other schools in China.

Inclusive Education

In the United States, students with visual impairments were the first to be educated alongside typically developing peers in the 1920s. As inclusion has increased exponentially in the past few

decades, U.S. educators have clearly amassed legislation, philosophical structure, and strategies to support inclusion. In contrast, inclusion is just beginning in China.

As the Chinese educational system has moved toward inclusion for primary school-aged children, we have established a strong foundation for services for these young children and preschoolers. The teacher/parent partnerships have recently been providing support. Broad legislation has been passed in Beijing, but there is not yet the funding, administrative practice or the local social strategies to support it adequately.

In recent years we have observed three schools in Nanjing that include young children with visual impairments. In one school, a five-year-old boy was mainstreamed as a favor to his grandfather, who was the school's gatekeeper. In another school, a little girl had been accepted for a trial year, and only then because her vision loss had been minimal. The third child, a six-year old who was totally blind, was accepted only because the principal at her private school championed inclusion. This was a brave decision, since it could have jeopardised the school's reputation for high standardised test scores. (Incidentally, the self-reliant and intelligent girl proved to be one of the brightest math students in her Kindergarten class. Her memory and recitation skills are so exceptional that she quickly learned English. We expect that her standardised test performance actually raised, rather than lowered, the school's averages.)

Chen, the little boy from Nantong who once spent his days with the sheep herd, was accepted to a local community school. He gets ready for school almost independently, beginning his school day at 7:00 a.m. He does respond more slowly than the other children do, but he loves to exercise right alongside them. He enjoys telling his father all about school at the end of the day.

Parents in Chengdu and Guangzhou are likewise supporting their children to participate in inclusive primary school programmes, testifying to the effectiveness of both parent/educator partnership and parent advocacy.

To encourage and support efforts toward inclusive education in China, we provided a weeklong workshop in Nanjing in March of 2009, using three early, local examples of inclusion in a case study method. Just as our teacher, Ellen, knew that American systems would not translate directly to China, we were well aware that Western ideas of inclusive education would look very different in China. We felt it was essential to make space for our Chinese colleagues to set their own agenda and voice their own concerns, including issues that we may not have identified.

Instead of simply replicating our models, we spent the week helping the participants to articulate for themselves such broad issues as the impact of inclusion on schools for the blind, clarification of roles on an inclusion team, and quality indicators for inclusive education. We helped participating Chinese teachers to anticipate logistical issues such as the transition process, and ways to provide braille transcriptions of print texts.

Although it is far from widely accepted in China, we are aware that the foundation for inclusion is already established in strong ECCE and preschool programmes for children with visual impairments and blindness. Our goal is to translate this belief into possibility. We encouraged

the workshop participants in Nanjing to continue to advocate for inclusion on an informal, grassroots level in order to establish some successful precedents. As more families and children have partaken of ECCE and preschool programmes, many children have acquired the learning skills that ready them for inclusion in their local primary schools.

There remain millions of children in China who, because they are blind or multiply disabled, are not being educated. Perkins International continues to reach out to those children and their families by collaborating with government education officials, involving families in programmes, and enabling training for teachers.

Perkins International facilitates efforts to deliver an increasing number of effective education options to children who are blind or visually impaired in China through many approaches. We support the capacity of families to serve the youngest children in their homes, work with schools for the blind to develop preschool services, help build programmes for students with multiple disabilities in schools, and increase the focus on inclusive education in China. By strengthening the systematic mentoring of teachers and aiding in the development of Quality Indicators, we strive to build a sound structure for these services that continue far beyond the scope of direct visits to our partners in China.

In time, it is our hope that children like Chen will no longer be viewed as “bad luck.” On the contrary, they will be fully involved in the daily life of their families and communities. For many, their accomplishments will lead to inclusion not only in school, but in the workplace as well. As they grow to adulthood, these children will contribute to and gain the respect of their communities. Ultimately, their example will be proof of the possibilities education offers.

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Changing Beliefs through Teacher Preparation Programmes: A Model Process for Developing University Capacity and Sustainability in Indonesia

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Abstract

This article describes a model programme in Indonesia, created to meet the significant need for trained teachers to work with children who are EIVI (Early Intervention Visually Impaired, 0-8 years) and MDVI (Multiply Disabled Visually Impaired). Implemented by Perkins International and Helen Keller International, the programme involved senior and junior faculty from three universities as well as mentor teachers. This collaboration succeeded in training capable teachers for EIVI/MDVI children, but two other significant outcomes emerged: a change in beliefs regarding the capabilities of children who are EIVI/MDVI, and a recognition of the critical need for education for this group. As a result, the participating faculty, teachers, and university trainees have become agents of change in Indonesia. They are empowered with the knowledge and skills to change attitudes and beliefs about EIVI/MDVI children.

Background

Children with EIVI and MDVI in Indonesia are highly vulnerable and often receive poor services or no services at all. Since the early 1990s, Perkins International has been supporting Indonesian programmes that serve children with visual impairments and multiple disabilities, including those who are deafblind. Since 2004, Helen Keller International (HKI) and Perkins International have collaborated to fill this need by establishing partnerships with programmes and families in Indonesia. These efforts have been supported by The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and HKI's Opportunities for Vulnerable Project (OVC) in Indonesia.

When Perkins International and HKI began collaborating in 2004, teachers in Indonesia were in serious need of training and children were at high risk. Therefore, the early work began with Perkins consultants training teachers in EIVI and MDVI skills. These trainings provided a blend of theoretical information and technical assistance in existing programmes. All trainings were held at agencies that served children with MDVI and EIVI so that participants could bring theory to practice through hands-on, practical experience. This work had two immediate goals: developing model programmes for the children, and working with both private and governmental schools to build local capacity. The over-arching goal was to develop the belief at all levels of Indonesian society that children with MDVI/EIVI must be educated.

The first group of trained teachers began working with children with EIVI and MDVI, and the students showed improvement. Following this early work, skillful teachers were selected to be

mentors. These mentor teachers joined the Perkins/HKI partnership and assisted in providing technical assistance to programmes throughout Indonesia.

The success of these initial activities and the vast need throughout the country demonstrated the critical importance of involving universities and the Ministry of Education. This paper focuses on two projects that were developed to train lecturers at 3 Indonesian universities: Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung – West Java (UPI), Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Jakarta (UNJ), and Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta (UNY).

First Project

The first project included partnering with universities and training senior faculty from the vision education programmes. The senior faculty (one from each university) were trained and then assisted in developing a syllabus for a course on teaching EIVI/MDVI children. These faculty played an important role in the negotiations with their respective universities, helping us get permission to offer the course. Like the mentor teachers, the senior faculty became important collaborators in the project.

The training of teachers, mentor teachers, and senior university faculty were strong building blocks for the second project that began in March of 2010.

Second Project

In 2010 USAID awarded Helen Keller International a three-year grant to strengthen the capacity of universities to provide a strong, practical-based pre-service training programme to new teachers in Indonesia. The senior faculty and mentors from the three Indonesian universities agreed to continue to support the second project by providing advice and assisting with training.

Perkins International staff, with strong connections throughout the country, identified skillful, experienced consultants to work on the project. They were selected for their abilities in multi-phase disability-specific teacher training, and their familiarity with disability programming in Indonesia and Asia. The consultants worked as a team with Perkins and HKI staff in the development and implementation phases of the programme. Perkins faculty developed the syllabus and the self-study programme, and provided the week-long trainings, with support from HKI and the universities.

The course provided face-to-face and self-study trainings to junior faculty and teachers. A detailed syllabus was developed by Perkins faculty, with assistance from senior university faculty and key persons from HKI, and all training materials and course assignments were developed and translated. The syllabus included weekly assignments: readings (translated into Bahasa), video clips, observations, discussion board postings, journal writing, and portfolio and course development. Throughout the course, trainees were assigned practice-based assignments, as well as written and oral presentation assignments.

The face-to-face trainings emphasised practical content and numerous simulations under blindfold, low vision simulators, and ear plugs. Videos of children in Indonesia and around the world illustrated various teaching skills and techniques. The face-to-face trainings also included

a focus on portfolio and syllabus development, which assisted the junior faculty in developing courses that they could teach at their respective universities in the following year.

Preparing for Implementation

In this phase, senior faculty were asked to identify and recommend junior faculty from the three universities to participate in the training course. The mentor teachers were included in the course in order to facilitate collaboration between the junior faculty and the highly qualified educators at model school programmes where they could do practicum assignments. The mentor teachers and junior faculty participated in pre-course written and interview-based evaluations, to assess their capacity, potential, and commitment.

Taking advantage of an opportunity in the region, Perkins International and Helen Keller International agreed in November 2010 to include junior faculty from three Philippine universities in the trainings. The trainees came from Philippine Normal University, Cebu Normal University, and University of Southeastern Philippines. This agreement provided an opportunity for regional networking and built depth and breadth of faculty expertise in the Philippines, as well.

During the 14 months of the course, the Perkins consultants focused on developing and implementing the intensive training programme for the selected junior faculty and mentor teachers. The course was divided into five components. The participants engaged in self-study for 8-12 weeks and then attended a week long face-to-face seminar taught by two members of the Perkins faculty (with the exception of the first seminar, which was taught by two senior faculty and a mentor teacher from Indonesia). Each component had a specific theme/topic. At the end of each component, the participants came together for the week-long training.

The programme plan also included the selection of practical teaching environments (model schools) near each university so the junior faculty could observe and get experience teaching children with MDVI or EIVI.

Implementation

The course began with the first week-long training held in Jakarta in January 2011, led by senior faculty from the three universities. Perkins faculty collaborated with the senior faculty and mentor teachers to plan this first training. There were twelve participants: four Indonesian faculty members, three Philippine faculty members, and five mentor teachers. This course included an overview of EIVI and MDVI, emphasised that children with disabilities can and should be educated, and the importance of making partnerships with families.

Following the first face-to-face course, participants began the self-study. The syllabus provided a week-by-week self-study plan which included observations, video review, discussion board questions, journal writing, and course and portfolio development. The participants were provided with all the materials (video clips and readings translated into Bahasa) for the self-study period.

The week-long trainings emphasised practical content, with numerous experiential activities under blindfold, low vision simulators, and ear plugs. In addition, each weeklong seminar included observation of and interactions with EIVI/MDVI children at one of the model schools.

Videos of classroom interactions were used to illustrate various teaching techniques, and developing observation, analysis and assessment skills. Other learning activities included small group work, discussions and role-play.

There were four more week-long intensives throughout the 14-month programme, with these themes:

- Assessment and Communication, Part I;
- Assessment and Communication, Part II;
- Concept Development, Motor Development and Orientation and Mobility;
- Behaviour, Curriculum Development, Classroom Management, Transition and Inclusion.

Upon completion of the fifth and final week-long seminar in October 2011, the next steps of the project were for each of the junior faculty to implement a course at his/her respective university.

Course Evaluation

The evaluation of the course was conducted in a variety of ways, both formally and informally, throughout the instructional period as well as at the end of the final week-long training.

At the beginning of each week-long course, participants completed a questionnaire related to the specific competencies to determine baseline knowledge. A similar questionnaire was distributed at the end of the week as well. This information was used to evaluate individual progress.

In addition, participants completed a daily feedback form at the end of each day's training. They were asked to identify the topics and points that were most helpful, as well as areas in which they needed more information. The topics that were identified as being unclear or needing further amplification were addressed in the following day's training.

At the conclusion of the final training, all participants submitted evaluations designed to collect both quantitative and qualitative information. The trainees rated their knowledge and skills on the 80 competencies articulated in the course syllabus, using a rating scale (1-10). Average rating by the participants on the 80 competencies was 7.9. The scores ranged from 7.00 (low) to 9.13 (high).

Participants rated the following topics as the most valuable: Communication, Functional Curriculum, Assessment, Concepts, Teaching Strategies, and Basic Concepts of MDVI. In addition, participants also valued the learning from videos, on-site observation of children, and the simulation activities.

Participants indicated need for additional support and training in the following areas: continuity of current training approach, additional observation and learning at practicum sites, technical assistance or consultation on implementation of university course syllabi, updates with new teaching strategies, and media and tools for teaching for students with MDVI.

Programme Results

As of January 2012, all of the junior faculty had included the training content into their courses,

although the course titles are diverse. Even more importantly, EIVI/MDVI was recognised nationally as a course by the Ministry of Education.

In addition, the Perkins International and Helen Keller International team developed a plan for further consultation and support. In October 2012, there was a follow-up technical assistance visit by Perkins consultants, who reviewed implementation of the first course, helped plan for the second course, and provided need-based technical assistance for the participants.

During the visits to each university, the Perkins consultants and HKI staff observed the junior faculty teaching a topic in EIVI or MDVI. In addition, students currently taking the courses were interviewed and meetings were held with the junior faculty and the heads of the special education departments. Feedback and suggestions were provided to the junior faculty after each lecture. Practicum sites were also visited by the consultants, who participated in discussions related to practicum activities, evaluation of students, and cooperation between the universities and the schools.

Recommendations from the Evaluation Visit

Faculty should continue to review readings from the syllabus to enhance their lectures and to choose specific readings as hand-outs for students. Only one faculty completed the assignments in the course and by far was the best lecturer. This shows that the self-study assignments in the training package including the practical experience are effective. Continued direct experience with children with EIVI and MDVI will build faculty understanding and help them build their own store of experiences and examples to use in their teaching. Using their own photographs and videos based on their time in the schools will help them build a rich resource that they can use in their teaching.

In all three cities, new practicum sites should be explored. Additional sites will allow for richer hands-on experiences for the large numbers of university students, and will expose them to a range of models of service delivery. Additionally, the process of identifying new practicum sites can result in better identification and community awareness of EIVI and MDVI.

All three universities require support in the design of the practicum experiences for their students. Some things to think about include:

- Identifying key desired learning outcomes for students, activities that will enable these outcomes, and documenting student learning and skills.
- The logistics of a practicum – the number of hours, the activities involved, the responsibilities of the university faculty and the key people at the practicum site – should all be discussed and agreed upon in advance.
- Students should be supplied with clear observation questions, and write down their reflections. Both the principal of the school and the university faculty should receive copies.
- There should be a partnership between the university faculty and principals at the schools, to give feedback to students and evaluate their performance.

The lack of services for EIVI and MDVI children in Indonesia can be looked on as an opportunity to develop student skills in assessments, teaching practice, resource management, problem solving and other key skills. Advanced students can complete action-based research in the field.

The resources developed for the course could serve as a foundation resource for the faculty as well as students.

The faculty identified behaviour challenges of students with EIVI/MDVI as an area in which they would like further training. In addition, the consultants suggested advocacy and strategies for programme development.

Summary and Reflections

There were numerous factors that made this model successful. However, it is important to note that this project would not have been successful had it not been for the capacity built by the previous projects.

The faculty have developed a deep interest, passion and engagement with children with MDVI and EIVI. They have emerged as champions for good services and quality teacher preparation programmes, and are advocating for course work, etc. at the government level as well as with other special education universities.

The faculty have also changed how they perceive their own roles – from preparing students purely for higher education to taking pride in developing students who are eager to work directly with children with complex needs. Their own experiences have led them to direct their students' attention to the potential of children with EIVI/MDVI.

There was a long-term commitment by Perkins International in partnership with Helen Keller Indonesia. This relationship began in 2004 with an initial goal of programme development for preschool children with vision impairments. Over 8 years and three grants, the work evolved into building capacity at the university level in the area of teacher training. Each of the previous projects helped to set the stage for the success of the most recent project. In other words, the development of capacity is not based on this project alone but is a result of the previous work. The planning was systematic and systemic.

There was a commitment of capacity by the various partners involved: USAID, Helen Keller International, Perkins School for the Blind, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung – West Java, Universitas Negeri Jakarta – Jakarta, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, and National Ministry of Education. This commitment was a critical component of the project and clearly contributed to its success.

Collaboration with model practical sites, including YPD Rawinala, Special School for the Blind SLB-A Lebak Bulus, and Helen Keller Indonesia in Yogyakarta was a key factor to the success of the project. Combining the solid foundation of theory with the opportunity to experience the practical application of those theories was invaluable.

The intraregional networking that was developed between the Philippines and Indonesia was another significant success. Building relationships within the Asia region with universities in another country can only serve to strengthen the commitment to EIVI/MDVI children.

There were point people in each country (Indonesia and the Philippines) that had attended the Perkins Educational Leadership Program (ELP) in the past. For this project, there were former

ELP's in each country that were able to support the participants, the faculty and the consultants. This was extremely helpful in providing the instruction.

It is important to note that HKI team members have provided follow-up to all three universities since the final training in October 2011.

The faculty in all three universities receive support from the heads of their department. All three universities have adapted the EIVI/MDVI content to fit the culture and structure of their respective departments of Special Education.

Finally, all the work that was done by each of the faculty was geared toward helping them build a university course to be delivered at their respective university. They were charged with developing a course syllabus from the very beginning of the course and at the end of each module. This goal provided the junior faculty with an immediate, practical application to the work they did in the course. In addition, they developed a portfolio that included their journal reflections, observations, discussions, etc. The goal of the portfolio was to give them a place to document their experiences in a meaningful manner throughout the course.

Conclusion and Planning for the Future

It has been a challenging task to establish and maintain a university course on the education of children who have EIVI/MDVI when it is not a recognised category. The faculty have advocated effectively and made a strong beginning in their respective universities. They have advocated at the national level for recognition of the special learning needs of these children and have raised awareness for the need for specialised, focused teaching.

However, the most resounding outcome of this work has been the change in beliefs. Through the numerous activities--practical experience, reflections, review of videos, discussions, etc.--there has been a significant shift in the belief system amongst the faculty. Conversations with university students attending the courses of the junior faculty revealed an attitude change in their beliefs of the capabilities of EIVI/MDVI children and the necessity of competent teachers to provide education for these children.

These teachers, faculty and university students are agents of change in Indonesia. They have the power to change attitudes and beliefs about children who are visually impaired with multiple disabilities (MDVI) and young children who are visually impaired (EIVI). Indeed, they have already begun.

Voice and Vision India: Developing Regional Leadership and Expertise through Master Teacher Courses

Sampada Shevde, Director, Voice and Vision India

Introduction

Voice and Vision India (VVI) is a national resource and training center serving children with visual impairment and multiple disabilities (VIMD), including deafblindness. Established in 2002 with support from Perkins International, VVI aims to improve the quality of life for children with VIMD by creating a network of educators, professionals, and families that enhance their access to education and other services. Voice and Vision India works in partnership with government agencies and NGOs to train Master Teachers, who in turn train teachers, community-based rehabilitation (CBR) workers, supervisors and families of children with visual impairment and multiple disabilities in all regions and states of India. VVI has also trained and supported professionals from other Asian countries, including Indonesia, Philippines, Bangladesh, Nepal, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Malaysia.

From the beginning, Voice and Vision India has worked to build the capacity of organisations to initiate and improve services for children with VIMD. To date, training has produced 75 Master Teachers, as well as more than 2000 teachers, therapists, and support staff for NGOs and government projects. Some of the trainings have been conducted in partnership with National Trust, an autonomous body of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India.

The population of children with sensory impairments and multiple disabilities in India still remains largely unidentified. Although a lot of children in both urban and rural areas do have access to educational programmes, these services may not be appropriate and effective for children with vision impairment and additional disabilities, whose needs are distinct.

With few exceptions, most training courses in India prepare teachers to work with children with single disabilities. These teachers are not equipped to deal with the needs of children with sensory impairments and multiple disabilities.

To address this training need, Voice and Vision India, supported by Perkins International, developed the Master Teacher course to build leadership and expertise among educators and families. These leaders work to create educational opportunities for children with deafblindness and visual impairment with multiple disabilities across India.

Through our various partnerships, we are able to recruit participants for a comprehensive and sequential training programme. These educators return to initiate services for children with VIMD in their own organizations and support other professionals in doing the same.

What is the Impact of the Course?

The Master Teacher course was specifically developed by Voice and Vision India to:

- Increase access to appropriate educational services for children with visual impairment and multiple disabilities, most of whom were previously unserved;
- Improve teaching practices in organisations serving children with multiple disabilities;
- Develop trainers and leaders to support programmes for children with MDVI at the regional level;
- Empower organisations to emerge as service providers in the field of sensory multiple disabilities through effective services, advocacy efforts and support to other organisations.

The course, which is divided into three levels, specifically helps teachers trained to work with students with single or multiple disabilities. The educators gain further insight into working with various combinations of disabilities that exist along with vision impairment. The Master Teacher training enables senior teachers to grow in skills and leadership. The Level 2 and Level 3 courses prepare participants to become mentors and agents of change in their organisations and regions.

- Master Teacher Level 1: On completion of twelve weeks of intensive training, Level 1 participants are Trainers, qualified to train teachers in their own organisations, NGOs, and families.
- Master Teacher Level 2: Trainers participate in a two-week course designed to develop leadership skills. Following this two-week training, they implement their action plans for their region and organisation to expand quality services for children with VIMD. Upon completing Level 2, trainers are now Master Teachers.
- Master Teacher Level 3: Participants are trained over two weeks to develop skills to become Mentors for their region and become agents of change.

Master Teacher Level 1 Training

The 12-week Level One training course has been designed to cover knowledge and skills essential for a senior special educator or therapist to develop as a Trainer. The theoretical and practical inputs cover topics such as introduction to vision impairment with additional disabilities, developing communication, functional assessment of various developmental areas, therapeutics, social skills, play and recreation, service delivery models, orientation and mobility and developing mentorship skills. The training includes a variety of simulation activities, lectures, discussions, group work, assignments, visits to various organisations, observations, demonstrations, developing lesson plans and presentations.

Phase 1 begins with three weeks of classes involving theory, observation, and practical work, and concludes with participants preparing for their assignments at their respective centers. Each participant develops an individual action plan identifying specific areas they will work on during the next seven weeks in their own organisation, such as making Individual Education Plans, planning or redesigning the time tables, or developing low cost materials for play. Phase 2 brings the teachers back for two final weeks of classes.

Master Teacher Level 2 Training

During Level 2 training, participants develop leadership skills. Following this two-week training, they implement their actions plans for improving education for children with VIMD in their organisations or regions. They submit a detailed report about the practical work carried out in their respective organisations.

Master Teacher Level 3 Training

Finally, there is a second two-week session of classes which focuses on developing mentoring skills. Participants who complete Level 3 are qualified to act as Mentors to other educators in their regions.

Over the last 6 years, the course has developed over 75 trained Master Teachers who are providing services to children with VIMD in various regions of India and countries in Southeast Asia. Due to their efforts, more than 5000 children with VIMD have access to appropriate educational services.

In interviews with parents of children served through the VVI-trained Master Teachers, nearly all noted that their children were receiving educational services that were meaningful to them for the first time ever.



Participants in a simulation exercise for functional vision assessment



The map above shows the presence of the trained Master Teachers in India. The state of Manipur in the North East is the latest addition to the states with trained teachers.

A Success Story in Manipur State

The Malsawm Initiative (TMI) in Manipur is an example of a school that benefitted greatly from Master Teacher training. Mr. Pauzagin Tonsing participated in the year 2011-12, and shares his experience:

The gravity of the condition of disability in our area is alarming. Our district Churachandpur is in Manipur bordering with Mizoram in India and Myanmar. With no school for children with special needs in our town, I sent my son for two long years to

a regular school where teachers are untrained and inexperienced in teaching a blind child. Done. I am done. This struck me many times. Having no option we started a school for children with special needs, The Malsawm Initiative (TMI) in Manipur and realised that the road that we have taken is too tough as we had no experience in this area.

However luck favoured me and my contact with Voice & Vision India (VVI) opened the door for light to come in. VVI gave me an opportunity to join Master Teacher Training (MT) in December 2011. The course was well planned, the resource persons were well versed with their subject, with a good time for practical exposure. It was like opening flood gates to in-depth knowledge.

Our school, The Malsawm Initiative (A School for Children with Special Needs)/ TMI saw a new dawn right after the Phase I of Master Teacher Course.

After the completion of Level I of the Master Teacher course, Mr. Pauzagin organised a number of programmes at The Malsawm Initiative during the seven-week period of practical work. He arranged for professional development through a One-Week Teachers' Refresher Course. The educators developed Individual Education Plans for all the students after completing this refresher. He organised an orientation programme for parents, which flourished and grew into The Parents Support Group at TMI.

The orientation programme also helped the parents to realise the importance of their support for their child's education and rehabilitation, the need to be partners in the processes. They raise their own funds and help the school in many ways. The entire group volunteers, taking turns on a weekly basis to ensure there is daily classroom support.

After the completion of Level II, Mr. Pauzagin was involved in bringing about much-needed changes in The Malsawm Initiative. The staff reviewed the learning environment, materials and several educational activities, and reorganised them to encourage greater participation and two-way interaction between the students and the teachers.

Circle time is now much more interactive, and the classroom set-up and seating arrangements are revised. Classroom teaching, outdoor activities, and activities of daily living have improved as students are encouraged in choice-making and participation. The Individual Education Plans prepared by the teachers are need-based and linked to the educational priorities of the individual students. The IEP incorporate the theme of "learning through play" in various activities planned throughout the day.



Children engrossed in the gardening activity

Mr. Pauzagin says, “The relevant practical exposure that we had during the training was a very important aspect which contributed to the improvement of our school. It gave us an exposure to various service delivery models, and helped us plan an educational programme that focuses on student participation and parental involvement.”

There are still many areas which need attention, but The Malsawm Initiative staff continue to improvise on their programmes. In spite of the constraints of Manipur’s geographical remoteness and the school’s lack of a regular source of funding, TMI has a strong commitment to provide services for children with vision impairment and multiple disabilities.

Voice and Vision India continues to provide follow up support to The Mawsalm Initiative, including technical assistance and on-site programme consultation, as well as educational materials and equipment required for the implementation of the educational goals of the children. The partnership of TMI and VVI will be a long-term relationship, and will continue to empower the staff and parents. VVI will provide short trainings, exposure visits, and mentoring support to help the school continue developing quality services in Manipur, a state which has no other services at present for children with VIMD.

Mr. Pauzagin shares, “The partnership with Voice & Vision India for the technical support will help us a lot in improving the educational services in the school and the support for teachers and parents training will make another big change in the quality and extent of services provided to the students. Thanks to Voice and Vision India for the training and the support we are getting in this unserved region of the country.”

The Way Ahead

With the support of its team of Master Teachers, VVI plans to develop many such services in various parts of India. Many of these states have only one or two agencies for the entire population, and others do not have any services at all. We hope to reach a stage where all children with VIMD and their families will have access to appropriate and quality educational services, helping them realise their fullest potential.

Resources Created by Voice and Vision India

To provide further information related to various areas in terms of educational needs, VVI with the support of several experienced professionals in India has developed a variety of books, booklets and a DVD.

Creating Learning Opportunities: A Step-by-Step Guide to Teaching Students with Vision Impairment and Additional Disabilities, Including Deafblindness is a comprehensive resource manual that provides information on various topics ranging from Assessment, Curriculum, Programme Development and Communication.

Starting Services for Children Who Have Vision Impairment with Additional Disabilities, including Deafblindness. This booklet is a compilation of the essential information required by an organisation for starting services for children with VIMD.

A DVD for families of children with visual impairment and multiple disabilities including deafblindness, *Your Needs Answered*, has been developed by VVI in partnership with The National Trust, Government of India, MSJE and CEMCA.

All these materials, which were developed by experts in the field of vision impairment and additional disabilities in India, include a lot of photographs, illustrations and case studies and are widely circulated throughout India and in other countries.

Contact Details:

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Education of Teachers of the Visually Impaired in Bulgaria: Sofia University

Mira Tzvetkova-Arsova, Associate Professor, Sofia University, Bulgaria

Sofia University, “St Kliment Ohridsky” is the oldest university in Bulgaria. It was founded in 1888 with the generous donation of two wealthy and well-educated Bulgarian merchants – Evlogi and Hristo Georgievi. Today Sofia University is a state university, sponsored fully by the government.

The Faculty for Primary and Preschool Education has six departments, including Special Education and Speech Therapy. Education of Visually Impaired is one of the four specialties of the Special Education department. This specialty or module is available only in Sofia University; no other university or college in Bulgaria offers this expertise.

The educational model for the Special Education department is:

1. In the first 3 semesters all students in Special Education (excluding those in Speech Therapy) take together basic subjects in general education, psychology, foundations of medicine, neurology etc.
2. After completing the third semester, students apply for one of the four modules. They concentrate in that field for the rest of their academic study (five semesters), becoming a specialist in one disability area.

Those specialising in Education of Visually Impaired students take specific academic subjects such as:

- Braille;
- Orientation & Mobility;
- Activities of Daily Living (ADL);
- Low Vision Therapy;
- Tactile Creativity;
- Specific methods and strategies of teaching Math, Bulgarian language etc. to Visually Impaired;
- Foundations of education of students who are visually impaired and multihandicapped (MDVI), including those who are deafblind.



Throughout their studies, the students engage in once-a-week practice teaching experience. These classes are either at the special school for students who are visually impaired, or in the classes of the resource teachers who work in inclusive general education schools.

The students spend their final semester practice teaching, and are actively involved in classroom activities. At the end of the practice teaching period, they have two exam-classes – one in a academic subject and one in a special programme of personal choice.

Every four or five years, the Department of Special Education and Speech Therapy offers a three-semester paid master programme on education of the multiply disabled. The programme is designed to provide deeper knowledge on multiple disabilities including deafblindness. Sofia University has a few master programmes in Special Education designed for foreign students that are taught in English.

There are two special schools for students with visual impairments in Bulgaria, one in the capital city of Sofia and another in the city of Varna. Both schools have classes for pupils of all ages who are visually impaired, from preparatory class through 12th grade. In the past 20 years the schools have been admitting more and more visually impaired students with additional disabilities (MDVI). They currently comprise nearly 60% of all pupils in each of the two schools. In this regard the university programmes offered by Sofia University meet well the demands of the practice.

Sophia University's Education of Visually Impaired programme has had many international contacts during the past 20 years, and has participated in many national and international projects. Until recently, this included ten years of support from Christoffel-Blindenmission, Bensheim, Germany. A lasting partnership is with the Perkins International programme of Perkins School for the Blind in Watertown, Massachusetts, USA. Through this collaboration, the Faculty was able to start and to carry out some very important initiatives:

- Annual national seminars for resource teachers working with students with visual impairment and with multiple disabilities (MDVI) in the regular schools;
- Annual seminars for small groups of resource teachers, offering specific knowledge in the fields of blindness and multiple disabilities, and assistance in finding appropriate strategies to work with their pupils;
- Annual seminars for small groups of general education teachers with students who are visually impaired or multiply disabled in their classrooms, providing information on specific techniques and methods for successful inclusion of these students.
- Short annual in-service training courses for the special education teachers working with visually impaired multiply disabled pupils (MDVI) in the special schools, updating their knowledge and skills in the field.

These initiatives were very well received by all participants who have attended them in the recent years. This enthusiasm reflects a deep need, and the University plans more short-term in-service trainings in the future.

The Department of Special Education and Speech Therapy at the Faculty for Primary and Preschool Education of Sofia University has very good relations and good cooperation with the two special schools for visually impaired, with the 28 regional resource centers in the country, and with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science. Bulgaria is a really good example for a practically working partnership between the educational institutions in the field of blindness and multiple disabilities.

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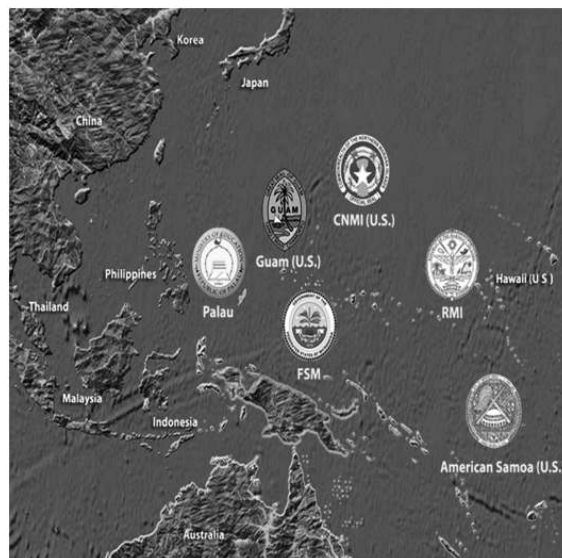
Changing Outcomes for Children with Visual Impairment in the Western Pacific: A Collaboration that Changed Us All

Laura Bozeman, Ph.D., Graduate Program Director of Vision Studies,
College of Education and Human Development, University of Massachusetts Boston, USA.

We envision a future world in which each individual is valued by society. In this society, the needs of each individual are respected and addressed. Individuals from diverse language, cultural, ethnic, and disability backgrounds are perceived and see themselves as contributing members of society. They have high expectations for leading fulfilling lives (Mason, Davidson & McNerney, 2000).

The Area

Micronesia, as the word indicates, is an area of many small islands. Micronesia is located in the Western Pacific and includes Guam, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, the Republic of Palau, and American Samoa among others. These islands have an incidence of visual impairment that is greater than that of the US mainland (Love, 2001).



The Need

Chuuk, an island in the Federated States of Micronesia, reports a high incidence of congenital microphthalmia (small eyes) and anophthalmia (no eyes). The estimated incidence of these disorders on the US mainland is four in every 100,000 births. On Chuuk, the estimated incidence is 140 cases per 100,000 births (Yomai & Pavlin, 2010).

Achromatopsia, another rare genetic condition, is characterised by light sensitivity, poor acuity, and the inability to distinguish colors. It is a common condition on the island of Pingelap in the

state of Pohnpei, also in the Federated States of Micronesia. As many as ten percent of the population is affected by achromatopsia.

Lack of Highly-Trained Teachers with Unique Skills in Visual Impairment

In 2010, there was only one credentialed teacher of students with visual impairment (TVI) and no orientation and mobility (O&M) specialists to serve 136 students. When the team visited two of these Micronesian islands, many additional children with visual impairments were identified. They were not included in the count because they have other disabilities that were considered primary, e.g. cognitive issues. Thus, many children with multiple disabilities that include visual impairments are in these locations and need services, but are not categorised as visually impaired.

| Entity | # Idea Reported Children with VI and Deaf Blindness | # Teachers working with Children with VI | % of Teachers who are fully credentialed in VI |
|----------------|---|--|--|
| American Samoa | 17 | 4 | 25% (1/4) |
| CNMI | 11 | 3 | 0 |
| Guam | 16 | 5 | 0 |
| FSM | 62 | 12 | 0 |
| RMI | 29 | 7 | 0 |
| ROP | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 136 | 32 | <1% |

A Grandmother's Request

The critical request came from a grandmother in one of the islands. Her granddaughter has a severe visual impairment. Appalled at the idea of sending her grandchild away from her family, her island, her home, the grandmother wanted the services to come to the community. "Why do we have to send her away?" This passionate request set into action the first waves of teacher-training in these locations.

Donna McNear, a TVI and O&M professional, began working in these islands in the early 2000s, training teachers to serve children with visual impairment. Working with colleagues at the University of Guam's Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service (UOG CEDDERS), Donna made tremendous strides in training and building infrastructure in the islands. After 10 years, it became clear that a university training programme was needed to prepare highly-qualified teachers to meet the unique needs of this low incidence population. The result will be professionals in visual impairment who live in these places and share these cultures.



Why Partner with UMass Boston Vision Studies?

The University of Massachusetts Boston has programmes that are ideally suited to fostering this work. UMB's Vision Studies programme began within the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI), the University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities as the Northeast Regional Center for Vision Education (NERCVE). The programme began with a specialisation in orientation and mobility, after the first O&M programme at Boston College closed in 1990. A training programme for teachers of students with visual impairment (TVIs) was added in 2000, followed by a programme for vision rehabilitation therapy (VRT) in 2007.

The ICI has an active role within UMass Boston and has recently become a new school within the university. The School of Global Inclusion and Social Development (SGISD) was established in part to foster the type of global collaboration called for in this project in the Pacific (<http://www.umb.edu/academics/sgisd>).

The Vision Studies programme at UMass Boston is a regional programme serving the New England states and is rooted in the Institute for Community Inclusion-the University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities at UMass Boston. The programme is founded on the principles defined by the National Plan for Training Personnel to Serve Children with Blindness and Low Vision (NPTP) (Mason, Davidson, & McNerney, 2000). This research confirmed the dearth of vision professionals in the U.S. that remains unresolved today.

The NPTP study covered the two-year period, 1997-1999, and demonstrated that a minimum of 5000 additional TVIs and 10,000 additional O&Ms were needed to meet the need at the time. In 2007 Ferrell reported that university programmes were preparing approximately 250 vision professionals per year which was still not enough to meet the need. The NPTP study's recommendations for preparing more personnel are:

- Use a regional model;
- Deliver instruction through distance learning;
- Explore diversified funding(Mason, Davidson, & McNerney, 2000).

Regional Model. For many decades in the U.S., the vision profession attempted to create more and more university personnel preparation programmes, striving for at least one in each state. The low incidence nature of blindness and low vision made that approach unworkable as there were not enough students in the individual programmes to sustain university support. Also, potential students in rural areas and applicants who may have difficulty traveling were left out (Ambrose-Zaken & Bozeman, 2010).

A broader approach allows recruiting across a wider area and generates a sufficient number of candidates to have credibility with the university. UMass Boston has had success in its use of the regional model, drawing students from across the 6 New England states. This practical success made the Massachusetts university the choice for implementing a regional programme to train vision impairment teachers in Micronesia.

Distance Learning. UMass Boston's Vision Studies programme is delivered through an accessible, online learning platform that is available to the student 24/7. This approach differs

from correspondence courses in that presentations, videos, interactive discussions, research, etc., are presented through the internet learning platform. Accompanying in-person classes allow the student to integrate theory into practice and have hands-on experiences with technology, devices, and physical skills.

Diversified Funding. The Vision Studies programme at UMass Boston uses a combination of federal monies in the form of OSEP and RSA grants, state support (both monetary and in kind) from UMass Boston, the Departments of Education, SPDG grants, and rehabilitation agencies, as well as private support. The programme hopes to develop an endowment as another source of student support in the near future.

Emerging Collaboration

The University of Guam CEDDERS, through funding from the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), developed the Pacific Consortium for Instructional Materials Accessibility Project (CIMAP). Its goals are to:

... build local and regional capacity for the development and implementation of the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standards (NIMAS) and the National Instructional Materials Access Center (NIMAC) requirements, including educational media activities for those children with disabilities who do not meet the NIMAC eligibility requirements, but who need accessible versions of educational materials as determined pursuant to Section 614(d) of IDEA (2008, CIMAP-brochure).

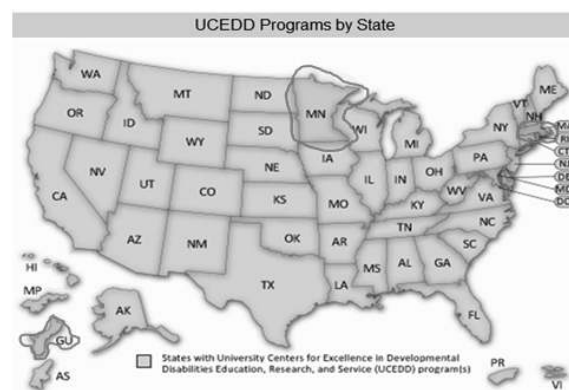
Among its many benefits, this project also provided a firm infrastructure for the current Pacific Visual Impairment Project within the geographically remote and rural island communities of the Pacific.

UCEDDs Come Together

The Pacific Visual Impairment Project (Pacific VIP) is a collaboration between three University Centers of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDDs): the University of Guam CEDDERS; the Institute for Community Inclusion-UMass Boston UCEDD; and the Institute on Community Integration UCEDD through the University of Minnesota.

The principal staff at UOG CEDDERS are Heidi San Nicolas and June de Leon. They developed the grant that was funded by OSEP, and partnered with UMass Boston's Institute of Community Inclusion-Vision Studies programme (Robert McCulley and Laura Bozeman) to deliver the content. External evaluation is through the University of Minnesota Institute on Community Integration (Michael Sharpe). The three UCEDDs collaborated to prepare 20 scholars to complete a Masters programme in Education in Vision Studies. The scholars' specialisations are as Teachers of Students with Visual Impairment and Orientation and Mobility professionals.

Directory



The Pacific VIP project began with a recruiting course, Education of Students with Visual Impairment. Of the 24 prospective scholars who applied, 20 successfully completed the course. The project progressed with 20 scholars from Guam, Saipan, Chuuk, Pohnpie, Kosrae, and American Samoa.

Challenges

Geographical Area. A major challenge is the vast geographical area covered by this collaboration(<http://mappery.com/West-Pacific-Islands-Map>). While the majority of the course content is available through an online learning platform, some aspects must be accomplished in a series of face-to-face meetings. Examples of the in-person content are: braille, technology, assessment strategies and learning to teach O&M strategies in simple to complex environments.

In order to provide the needed in-person time with the scholars, the faculty travel to Guam twice for two-week sessions of face-to-face classes. Guam is an ideal location because it offers access to the UOG campus, and it has varied O&M environments for both rural and urban skills. At the time of this writing, the Methods of O&M lab is complete, and future faculty visits will occur on the scholars' home islands. This on-site work supports integration of the theory, content, and skills into the actual environments where the children with visual impairments live.

Multiple Time Zones. The Pacific VIP scholars are spread across four different time zones, with the staff at UMass Boston in a fifth time zone. Scheduling virtual office hours and group presentation times required creativity to avoid conflicts with the scholars' work (and sleep) hours. Vision Studies faculty hold office hours and group discussion/presentations on Friday nights from 10 PM to midnight. With the time difference, these office hours for the scholars are Fridays, after work, and Saturdays.

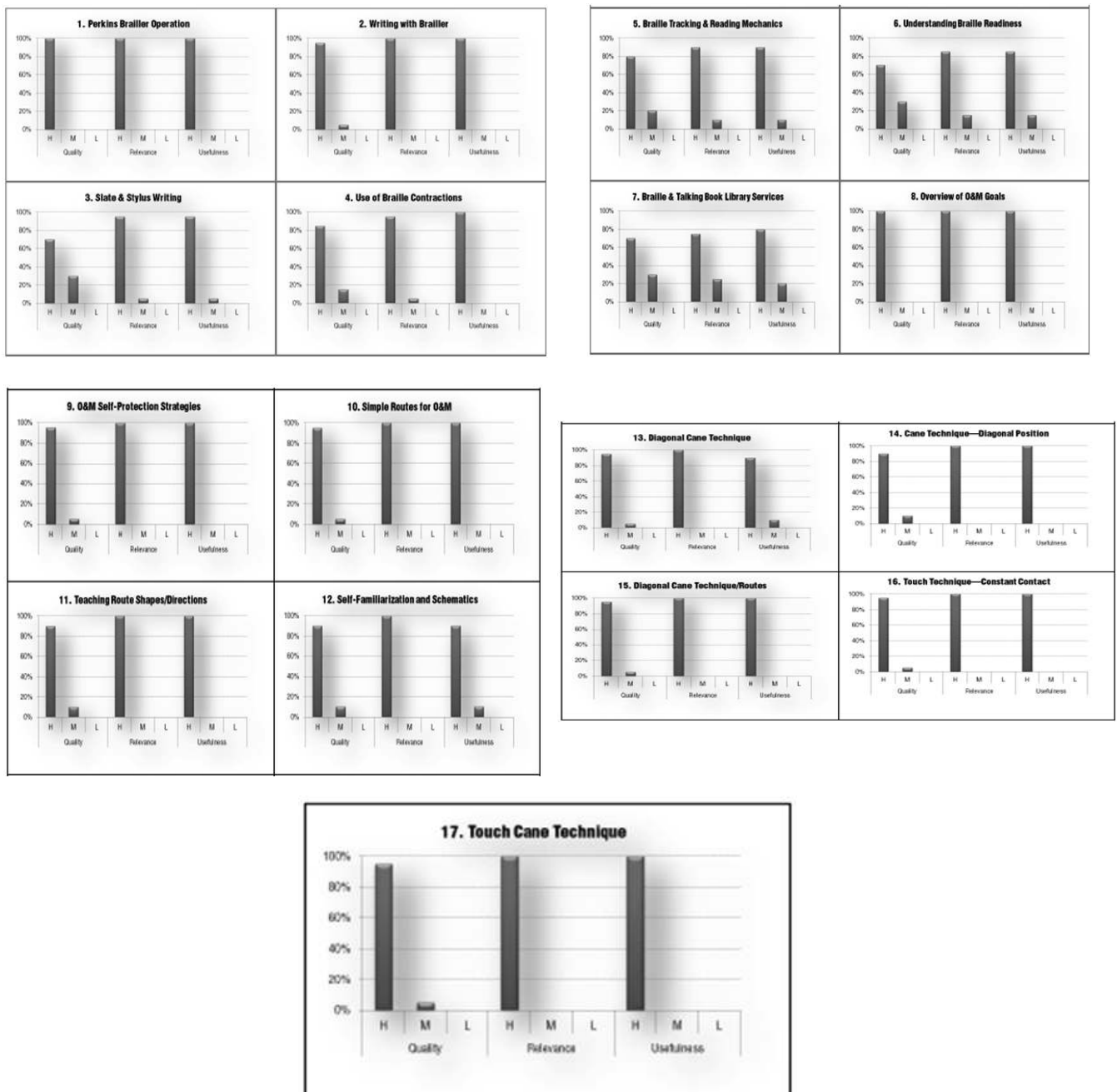
Many Cultures, Many Languages. Certainly, with scholars from five different entities, there are many different cultures and languages, bringing diverse views of disability and visual impairment to the project (Love, 2001). In some cultures, visual impairment is viewed as a punishment or source of shame. This may lead to families sheltering the children from school and activities outside of the home. Regardless of the cultural views, success for students with visual impairment calls for a balance of instructional strategies. These strategies must include the family and the home, as well as the wider community.

To help bridge the cultures, Connie Guerrero, the Pacific VIP Project Director at the UOG CEDDERS, is involved in the administration of each course. Ms. Guerrero reviews the content, quizzes, threaded discussions, etc. She advises the staff about language use, and makes suggestions for clarity in the instructions and wording. Ms. Guerrero also serves as a contact for the scholars, as they are often more comfortable speaking with her about course concerns. This networking is a positive solution for the faculty as well as the scholars.

External Evaluation

The external evaluation includes scholar surveys and “end of event” evaluations. The scholars are asked to rate the quality, relevance, and usefulness of the courses and in-person classes.

The first courses, Braille and Beginning O&M, were evaluated across 17 characteristics. 95% of the scholars rated the training as being of high quality, and 100 % said the experience was highly-relevant and useful.



Changing All of Our Lives

This collaboration continues, and all participants agree that this partnership is changing our lives. All involved are learning through shared cultures. Faculty are challenged to improve their teaching strategies and creativity as they meet the diverse learning styles of scholars for whom English is a second language. The scholars are learning and applying their knowledge, and they expand the world for the faculty by sharing their ideas, experiences, and strategies. Together this diverse team is changing the future for Micronesia's children with visual impairment.



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The Perkins SMART Brailier®: Changing the Way We Teach and Learn Braille

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Braille is the pathway to literacy for people who are blind and visually impaired. At Perkins, we believe firmly that braille—nearly 190 years since Louis Braille devised it—is still the best reading and writing system for people with significantly impaired vision. Braille not only gives a person the ability to read and write, it offers intellectual independence and enables them to learn and work alongside their sighted peers.

Perkins Products, a division of Perkins, has been engaged in a transformative three-year research and product engineering initiative to develop a new braille learning and teaching technology called the SMART Brailier®. The SMART Brailier concept was conceived and led by David Morgan, the Vice President and General Manager of Perkins Products. The goal was to add features to the classic Perkins Brailier® – the most widely used braille teaching tool in the world – which would make the learning of braille much easier. To the standard, mechanical Perkins Brailier, Perkins' product development team added audio output, so that the user can hear exactly what is being brailled – read back in letters, words, lines, or the entire text.

Another innovative feature is a visual display positioned on the front of the brailier. The display allows a user with partial vision or a sighted parent, teacher, friend, or sibling to see what is being brailled – in print and in electronic simulated braille (Sim Braille). Thus, the process of learning braille is opened to all and sped along by instantaneous, multi-sensory feedback.

In addition to the audio and visual feedback, the features of the SMART Brailier include:

- The ability to edit, save and transfer electronic documents via USB;
- The capability to download braille learning exercises;
- Headphone jack and volume control;
- Acapela Text to Speech from Acapela Group;
- Classic mechanical brailier mode – once the learner is fluent in braille, the audio and visual can be turned off;
- Multiple language platforms are being developed – currently we are working on French, Spanish, Arabic and other languages;
- Rechargeable and removable battery.

The SMART Brailier has been greeted with enthusiastic response at conferences, trade shows and by users around the world. Perkins Products is currently working with braille experts in various countries to localise the SMART Brailier for additional languages beyond English.

The research on the SMART Brailier began with an overview of the various target markets that seemed likely to benefit from it. It is clear that many members of the potential market demographics perceive braille as difficult to learn. These markets include:

- Teachers of the Visually Impaired, all of whom need to learn braille in order to teach it; who also become experts to whom parents and school administrators turn for recommendations on assistive technology.
- Parents who wish to learn braille in order to assist their children with homework and stay current on what their children are learning, just as sighted parents do.
- Adults with adventitious blindness, who desire or need to remain employed. Any adults avoid learning braille and rely solely on audio tools such as screen readers. This is partially due to their perception that braille is too difficult to learn, and also because they are likely to be skillful users of computers and other mainstream technologies.
- Children who are learning braille – the SMART Braille will allow them to practice on their own, when a teacher is not available or between lessons.

Perkins Products contracted with a product development firm – Product Development Technology (PDT) - based in Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A., to conduct market research with 129 users on the use of braille and the perception of the SMART Braille concept. This research included 100 plus hours of interviews and hands-on trials with these users across the United States. The users included children and teenagers who are visually impaired, parents, TVI's, visually impaired adults and elders, braille power users and individuals who are deafblind. Research findings drove the product design and feature set.

Essentially, the findings validated the following concepts:

- Children who are learning braille are motivated and excited by the audio and visual feedback. Thus the SMART Braille supports the learning process, particularly when a TVI is not available. The file saving(to USB drive) feature was added as a result of feedback from these interviews.
- Parents of the visually impaired are also very interested in the SMART Braille because they often prefer to learn braille visually rather than by touch.
- Teachers of the Visually Impaired indicated that this device would be very useful because with braille “you either use it or you lose it.” Particularly in developing countries, where TVI's may not be taught braille due to the expense, this could be an efficient, effective self-teaching tool.
- Adults who have lost their vision later in life are sometimes intimidated by the task of learning braille. Many rehabilitation programs offer a quick introduction to braille but do not provide essential long-term learning and practice. This device provides the opportunity to both learn braille more quickly and to practice at will. The tutorials which can be built into the SMART Braille are a significant enhancement for adult learning.
- “Power users” or very experienced braille users do not view this as a device that is suitable for their needs, but they are enthusiastic about using it to teach braille to others. In addition, when learners become skillful users, they can employ the SMART Braille as a simple mechanical braille when the audio and visual feedback is switched off.
- Individuals who are deafblind had differing opinions. Those who have no sight or hearing say that the SMART Braille would not be any more useful than a classic braille. However, those who have some sight or hearing were of the opinion that the device would make it much easier to learn braille.

Teachers of the visually impaired are very excited about the opportunity to learn braille more quickly and efficiently. Cathy Pasinski, an instructor at Hadley School for the Blind (Illinois), sees huge value for students and teachers. “I used it for several weeks and I see real value in using it to teach both teachers of the visually impaired and the students themselves. Having the immediate feedback is tremendous and makes it so much easier,” Cathy says.

More information can be found at www.smartbraille.org

Basic Therapy Skills Training for Parents in the Philippines

Marie M. Alonzo and Francis Choy

Parent Advocates for Visually Impaired Children (PAVIC), Philippines

“My son Macmac is more than two years old. He cannot sit nor stand; he can't even turn to his right or left on his own. He doesn't talk... If he needs something he just cries; if he's in pain, he cries again. I don't know what to do,” lamented Madel Aton, mother of Macmac.

Madel is just one of the hundreds of parents who are at a loss about what to do for their children with visual impairment. Macmac's parents, who live in the province just outside metro Manila, have two other children. The father's wages as a construction worker are not enough for all the family's needs, much less paying for medical specialists. As a result, Macmac has never been assessed by a developmental paediatrician.

In the Philippines, there are many children who are visually impaired with other disabilities. These children have serious developmental concerns. In addition to having visual impairments, many cannot talk, cannot hear; cannot sit, stand, or walk; or they may have feeding difficulties. The quality of life for these children and their families are beyond tolerance. Ideally, therapy to counteract their developmental challenges should be made available to them in infancy. However, there are few qualified therapists in the provinces and in poor urban neighborhoods, because the poverty of the areas makes it difficult to earn a professional livelihood. Hence, some parents whose children are in their teens have never heard about therapy.

Parents Advocates for Visually Impaired Children (PAVIC) is working to remedy this situation. The organisation has initiated a programme to bring the therapists to the provinces. In seminars, the therapists teach parents about the developmental needs of their children with visual impairment and other disabilities, and train them to provide appropriate therapy. This training has three objectives:

1. After the seminar, the parents will fully understand the importance of therapy to the development of their children.
2. A simple home programme is provided to each child; so the parents can work at home if there is no therapist nearby.
3. Parents will have the understanding and confidence to connect with a local therapist.

Three professionals collaborate to present the two-day training sessions—a physical therapist, an occupational therapist, and a speech pathologist. Each therapist talks for about two hours, then conducts an open question-and-answer forum. The therapists assess the children's needs and development, then suggest therapies, exercises, and activities that the families can do at home.

Training parents in basic therapy skills is a great help to them and their children in the absence of a therapist. For those families with few resources, the training gives them access to skills that are otherwise unaffordable.

PAVIC has sponsored 15 therapy skills trainings in the provinces, including Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. Four hundred parents and special education teachers have attended. These trained parents and teachers are encouraged to share what they have learned with others.

Macmac's mother Madel is one of the many parents trained, and she now has some basic therapy skills for working with her son at home. For more than 5 months, she has diligently applied what she learned from the two-day therapy skills training. Now, Macmac can turn onto his side on his own. With some assistance and support, he can sit on his wheelchair and attend school.

PAVIC is encouraged and inspired by many stories like those of Macmac, whose quality of life has greatly improved due to the training his parents received. However, the number of children with visual impairment and other disabilities grows year by year in the Philippines. When their development needs are not attended to, the children's disabilities worsen their quality of life.

The ages of the children under this programme range from 6 months to 19 years. Ideally, the country should have many qualified therapists to work directly with these children in infancy, thus minimising the developmental challenges caused by their disabilities. Additionally, these trained parents need follow-up visits to update their skills as their children grow older. PAVIC hopes to find support from other foundations or local government and NGOs, so we can mobilise more therapists and visit more areas and provide ongoing training.

This programme has been supported and sponsored by Perkins International programme of Perkins School for the Blind, Watertown, Massachusetts. Starting in August 2011, this programme is now jointly sponsored by Lions Clubs International Foundation, with participation of Lions Clubs Multiple District 301 in Luzon Area, Philippines.



Training Parent Volunteers as Teachers' Aides: An Innovative Project in the Philippines

Marie M. Alonzo, Parent Advocates for Visually Impaired Children (PAVIC), Philippines

In the Philippines, there are not enough trained special education (SPED) or resource room teachers for students with visual impairment in the public schools, especially in remoter regions. There are SPED teachers who have students with visual impairments, and are responsible for students in general education classes as well. In many situations, a special education teacher is responsible for between four and ten students who are visually impaired with other disabilities in her class. Each child has a different level of skills, different behavioural problems and different needs. The demands on the teachers' time and skills make it difficult to give each child the attention he or she needs.

Parents Advocates for Visually Impaired Children (PAVIC) developed the idea of training parent volunteers to serve as teachers' aides. The goal of this project is to help special education teachers provide quality education to children with multiple disabilities with visual impairments (MDVI) by training classroom helpers.

Through this Training Parent Volunteers project, PAVIC intends to create a pool of trained aides who will ease the pressures on SPED teachers. The assistance of the trained volunteers will give the professional teachers more time to plan and provide quality education to children with visual impairments.

The training for these parent volunteers has 5 stages:

1. PAVIC, in collaboration with Resources for the Blind (RBI) and special education teachers, creates the curriculum.
2. Parent volunteers participate in an intensive eight-day training.
3. Volunteers undergo 40 hours of hands-on training at RBI Pre-School.
4. Trainees log 240 hours of on-the-job-training in their respective schools.
5. After passing an examination, parent volunteers assume their duties in school classrooms.

In this first year of the program's implementation (2012-2013), 17 parent volunteers from 13 different public schools have been trained. Eight of the schools are in the National Capital Region (greater Manila) and five schools are from nearby provinces. We targeted schools that have more than 5 children with multiple disabilities and visual impairment (MDVI), and invited them to send parents to be trained in our program.

There are a number of requirements for the program candidates. Each volunteer must be a parent of a visually impaired child. The parents must complete all stages of the training, and must report to their respective schools regularly. The volunteers need at least an elementary education. The preparation is very intensive, especially during the initial eight-day training period. Later, as volunteers, they work at least a four-hour day. Often, Philippine parents accompany their children to school and stay nearby until classes are dismissed. Therefore, in many cases, the parent volunteers were on hand anyway, and now have the opportunity to earn a small daily allowance as well.

It is important to emphasize that the parent volunteers will not be employed as substitutes for special education teachers -- they assist the teacher but they do not teach. Their activities include helping during playtime, snack time or break time, assisting children with assigned activities while the teacher is

attending to other students, accompanying children to the rest room, helping the teacher prepare instructional materials, transcribing print text into braille, and much more.

The modules covered in the training include:

1. Role of Parent Volunteers;
2. Overview: Beliefs & Attitudes towards Learners with Visual Impairments and Multiple Disabilities;
3. Laws on Human Rights of Children with Disabilities, including specific laws in the Magna Carta and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD);
4. Understanding Multiple Disability with Visual Impairments;
5. Behaviour Management;
6. First Aid;
7. Daily Living Skills (Self-Help) and Orientation & Mobility;
8. Basic Braille Reading & Writing;
9. Basic Math/Abacus (Reading, Writing, Setting of Numbers).

We're on our first year of implementation, and the 17 parent volunteers now report to their respective schools to assist their SPED teachers during class hours. PAVIC manages the program and is conducting a monthly monitoring of the performance of the parent volunteers. Additionally there will be a quarterly monitoring and summative evaluation. The success of this project will be measured by:

1. Statistics and physical target;
2. Number of parents trained;
3. Number of teachers and schools participating;
4. Number of parent volunteers participating in school;
5. Number of children helped.

Success Stories

A six-year-old girl didn't know how to pull her pants up or down when going to the restroom. With the help of the parent volunteer, she can now pull up her pants by herself. It will take a little more time before she can be totally independent in going to the restroom.

A 24-year-old with low vision and a learning disability has difficulty in reading and writing. Due to the perseverance of his special education teacher and PAVIC's parent volunteer, his skills have improved greatly. With the help of the aide, he is now starting to read words and sentences, can create a market list, jot down recipes or instructions, and cook.

We hope that the Department of Education and the local government will see the importance of the parent volunteers in the development of our children with MDVI, and adopt the program throughout the country. Although we have a shortage of special education teachers, the assistance of the trained parent volunteers makes it possible to provide a quality education to children with visual impairment and additional disabilities.

PAVIC is enthusiastic about this parent volunteer program, and looks forward to its continued success in the next year. PAVIC hopes to expand to more provinces, particularly Visayas and Mindanao, where appropriate educational services are badly needed.

This project is sponsored by Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), in partnership with the Department of Education and Resources for the Blind, Inc.