

The Educator



VOLUME XXXIV, ISSUE 2

JANUARY 2021



A Publication of



**The International Council for Education of
People with Visual Impairment**

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS

PRESIDENT

Frances Gentle

The Renwick Centre
Royal Institute for Deaf and
Blind Children
Private Bag 29
Parramatta, NSW 2124
AUSTRALIA
frances.gentle@ridbc.org.au

FIRST VICE PRESIDENT

Praveena Sukhraj-Ely

Department of Justice and
Constitutional Development,
Momentum Centre,
329 Pretorius Street, Pretoria,
SOUTH AFRICA
psukhraj@justice.gov.za

SECOND VICE PRESIDENT

Rima Canawati

P.O. Box 100
Bethlehem
PALESTINE
rima.qanawati@gmail.com

TREASURER

Nandini Rawal

Blind People's Association
132 Ft. Ring Road
Vastrapur
Ahmedabad 380 015
INDIA
bpaiceviad1@bsnl.in

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

Lord Low of Dalston

Royal National Institute of
Blind People
105 Judd Street, London
WC1H 9NE
UNITED KINGDOM
colin.low@mib.org.uk

PRESIDENT EMERITUS

Lawrence F. Campbell

1, Center Street,
Rockland, Maine 04841
USA
larry.icevi@gmail.com

FOUNDING ORGANISATIONS

American Foundation for the Blind

Penny Rosenblum

1401 South Clark Street,
Suite 730, Arlington, VA 22202
USA
prosenblum@afb.org

Perkins School for the Blind

Dave Power

175 North Beacon Street
Watertown, MA 02472
USA
dave.power@perkins.org

Royal National Institute of Blind People

David Clarke

105 Judd Street
London WC1H 9NE
UNITED KINGDOM
david.clarke@mib.org.uk

INTERNATIONAL PARTNER MEMBERS

CBM

Monika Brenes

Stubenwald-Allee 5
64625 Bensheim
GERMANY
Monika.Brenes@cbm.org

Light for the World

Nafisa Baboo

26 Niederhofstrasse
A11-20 Vienna, AUSTRIA
n.baboo@light-for-the-world.org

Norwegian Association of the Blind and Partially Sighted (NABPS)

Terje Iversen

P.O. Box 5900, Majorstua 0308
Oslo, NORWAY
terje.iversen@blindeforbundet.no

Organización Nacional de Ciegos Españoles

Ana Peláez

C/ Almansa, 66, 28039
Madrid, SPAIN
apn@once.es

Overbrook School for the Blind

Todd Reeves

6333 Malvern Avenue,
Philadelphia, PA 19151-2597
USA
todd.reeves@obs.org

Perkins School for the Blind

Katherine Holland

175 North Beacon Street
Watertown, MA 02472, USA
katherine.holland@perkins.org

Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children

Frances Gentle

Private Bag 29, Parramatta,
NSW 2124, AUSTRALIA
frances.gentle@ridbc.org.au

Royal National Institute of Blind People

David Clarke

105 Judd Street, London WC1H 9NE
UNITED KINGDOM
david.clarke@mib.org.uk

Sightsavers

Andrew Griffiths

35 Perrymount Road
Haywards Heath
West Sussex RH16 3BW
UNITED KINGDOM
agriffiths@sightsavers.org

Royal Dutch Visio

Sabine Fijn van Draat

Amersfoortsestraatweg 180
1272 RR Houses
THE NETHERLANDS
sabinefijnvandraad@visio.org

REGIONAL CHAIRPERSONS

AFRICA

Gertrude Oforiwa Fefoame

Sightsavers' Global Advocacy Advisor
Densu Point, P.O. Box KIA 18190
North Dzorwulu, Accra
GHANA
gofefoame@sightsavers.org

EAST ASIA

Aria Indrawati

Pertuni (The Indonesian Blind
Association)
P.O.Box 386, Jalan Raya Bogor,
Km.19 Ruko Blok Q No. 13-L,
RT01 RW04, Kramat Jati,
East Jakarta
INDONESIA
aria.indrawati@gmail.com

EUROPE

Hans Welling

Diependaalsedrift 32
1213cr Hilversum
THE NETHERLANDS
wellingja@yahoo.com

LATIN AMERICA

Maria Cristina Sanz

avda. 13 n 1207, flor 9 dpto. A
(1900) LA PLATA
ARGENTINA
latinoamericaicevi@gmail.com

NORTH AMERICA / CARIBBEAN

Kay Alicyn Ferrell

Professor of Special Education,
Emerita
University of Northern Colorado
Campus Box 146
501, 20th Street
Greeley, CO 80639
USA
kay.ferrell@unco.edu

PACIFIC

Ben Clare

Project Manager
Pacific Islands activities
Aspen Medical Foundation
PO Box 231
Deakin West ACT 2601
AUSTRALIA
bwclare@gmail.com

WEST ASIA

Bhushan Punani

Blind People's Association
132 Ft. Ring Road, Vastrapur
Ahmedabad 380 015
INDIA
blinabad1@bsnl.in

INTERNATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

Deafblind International

Mirko Baur

Alte Dorfstrasse 3d, CH-8135
Langnau am Albis
SWITZERLAND
mirko.baur@tanne.ch

World Blind Union

José Viera

1929 Bayview Avenue
Toronto, Ontario M4G3E8
CANADA
jose.viera@wbu.ngo

International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness

Peter Holland

Office 6068, Aldgate Tower
2 Leman St., London E1 8FA
UNITED KINGDOM
pholland@iapb.org

Chief Executive Officer

Mani, M.N.G.

No.3, Professors' Colony,
SRKV Post, Coimbatore - 641 020
Tamil Nadu, INDIA
ceo201922@gmail.com

Editor

Kay Ferrell

Professor Emerita, Special Education
University of Northern Colorado
Campus Box 146
Greeley, CO 80639
USA

Associate Editor

M.N.G. Mani

CEO, ICEVI

Editorial Committee

Frances Gentle

Kay Ferrell

M.N.G. Mani

Designing

ICEVI Secretariat

No.3, Professors' Colony
S.R.K. Vidyalaya Post
Coimbatore - 641 020
Tamil Nadu, INDIA

Telefax : 91-422-2693414

e-mail : ceo201922@gmail.com

CONTENTS

1. Message from the President and CEO	02
2. Message from the Editor	05
3. The Body with Distancing: An Educational Experience with Children with Multiple Disability During the Pandemic - Lic. Melina Andrea Rigoni	06
4. Improving Educational Outcomes for Learners with Visual Impairment in Kenya through Visionary Learning - Martin Kieti	13
5. COVID 19: Impact and Responses - ICEVI Europe Report - Stephen McCall	17
6. COVID 19: Impact and Responses - ICEVI Latin America Report - Cristina Sanz	41
7. COVID 19 and Mobility for Persons who are Blind - ICEVI West Asia	50
8. Response to Covid by ICEVI West Asia - Bhushan Punani	54
9. Talking Technology - Ben Clare	58
10. Parent Perspectives - Susan LaVenture	61
11. Need for amendments to the 2010 Articles of Association (AOA) and Memorandum of Association of ICEVI	62
12. Articles of Association	63
13. Memorandum of Association	70
14. Proposed amendments to the 2010 Articles of Association (AOA) and Memorandum of Association of ICEVI - March 2021	72

Our International Partners





Message from **The President & CEO**



Dear Readers

This message started its life as a reflection on the 2016-2020 ICEVI quadrennium. However, as the COVID-19 pandemic became a global health emergency in early 2020, ICEVI extended its term by an additional year, resulting in a five year “quinquennium”. As we prepare for our first virtual General Assembly in June 2021, in partnership with the World Blind Union and hosted by ONCE, we offer this reflection on the past five years.

Commencement of the ICEVI term in 2016 coincided with the tenth anniversary of the United Nations historic adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). The year of 2016 also marked the first anniversary of adoption by UN Members States of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These international frameworks, together with other human rights instruments, foster disability-inclusive development and the rights of all children to equitable participation in education, leaving no-one behind.

There is no doubt that members and partners will need to redouble their efforts to promote disability-inclusive education systems and communities. The global pandemic presents new threats to realisation of the 2020 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals and targets. It is noteworthy that in December 2020, the United Nations Secretary General, António Guterres, described how the pandemic was deepening pre-existing societal inequalities, and impacting the most vulnerable and marginalised in society, including women and girls, persons with disabilities, and low income communities.

At the commencement of the quinquennium, ICEVI’s Executive Committee (EXCO) members reaffirmed their commitment to advancing the UNCRPD and the UN Education 2030 Agenda and Framework for Action. In early 2017, the EXCO members set the following three strategic goals to guide ICEVI activities at global and regional levels:

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

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

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

Activities of member and partner organisations have included information sharing and networking using the ICEVI global and regional websites and social media platforms. Advances in inclusive digital technologies have supported the creation of open access publications, resources and training materials which are available for download on the ICEVI global and regional websites. Publications include joint ICEVI-WBU position statements on education and braille literacy, issues of The Educator (in English and Spanish), the ICEVI E-News, and annual ICEVI reports.

We were fortunate to have Ms Marianne Riggio of Perkins School for the Blind as Editor of The Educator for several years. Marianne stepped down from the position in 2019 and we are delighted that Professor Kay Ferrell has accepted the invitation to become the new Editor. In addition to her editorial responsibilities Prof Ferrell's contributions include leadership of the working group that authored the Start-up teacher training curriculum in vision impairment education. This open access curriculum is designed for countries with limited pre-service or in-service training programs, and may be downloaded from the ICEVI website onto a computer, mobile phone or other device.

Another significant achievement during the quinquennium has been the creation of the ICEVI Math Made Easy YouTube channel which contains over 175 instructional mathematics videos for teachers and schools enrolling students with visual impairment. The YouTube channel includes the first edition of transcripts of 50 instructional videos which will assist governments and education sectors in translation of the videos into other languages.

The ICEVI-Nippon Foundation higher education initiative in East Asia has continued to prepare young adults with visual impairment for success in their chosen fields of study and employment. We are delighted that The Nippon Foundation has extended its support for the initiative to 2023. ICEVI and the Overbrook Nippon Network on Education Technology (ON-NET) are currently preparing a joint publication highlighting the positive impact created by The Nippon Foundation on the lives of young adults with vision impairment in the East Asia region. This publication will be released during the June 2021 virtual General Assembly.

Governance has been a priority during the 2016-2021 quinquennium. The ICEVI EXCO established a Governance Committee in early 2017 which included the ICEVI President and CEO, together with representatives of the Principal Officers, Regional Presidents, and international partner member organisations. This Committee was tasked with developing a Governance Framework that made explicit the governance and management functions and

responsibilities of individuals and organisations operating under the ICEVI name at global and regional levels. We are grateful to Ms Sabine Fijn van Draat of the Royal Dutch Visio who led development of the Governance Framework. The Governance Committee has prepared a list of proposed amendments to the 2010 Articles of Association and 2010 Memorandum of Association. The purpose of the proposed amendments is to ensure the constitution reflects current ICEVI governance and administration structures, including the legal entity status of several ICEVI regions. The amendments are presented in this issue of The Educator, and will be tabled for approval at the June 2021 General Assembly.

It has been a great pleasure to share this chapter of ICEVI's history with the Principal Officers, Presidents and Committees of ICEVI's seven regions, partner members, and the broader ICEVI constituency. We have shared many experiences and learnt a great deal from our fellow Principal Officers, Lord Colin Low, Immediate Past President; Dr Praveena Sukhraj-Ely, First Vice President; Ms Rima Canawati, Second Vice President; Ms Nandini Rawal, Treasurer; and Dr Larry Campbell, President Emeritus. We acknowledge the collegialship and dedication of ICEVI's Regional Committees, under the leadership of regional Presidents, Ms Gertrude Oforiwa Fefoame (Africa), Mr Hans Welling (Europe), Ms Aria Indrawati (East Asia), Ms Cristina Sans (Latin America), Prof Kay Ferrell (North America and the Caribbean), Mr Ben Clare (Pacific), and Dr Bhushan Punani (West Asia). Their reports in the issue reflect the unique characteristics of each region and how they are responded to the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In looking forward to ICEVI's 70th anniversary in 2022, we pay our respects to the past and current leaders and decision makers of ICEVI. ICEVI was formed in the Netherlands in 1952 by the Royal National Institute of Blind People (UK), Perkins School for the Blind (USA), and the American Foundation for the Blind (USA). Their membership and representation on the global Executive Committee since formation is a testament to their commitment to promoting education equality and opportunity for children and young people with vision impairment, including children with multiple disability or deafblindness.

We look forward to welcoming you to the virtual WBU-ICEVI General Assembly in June 2021.



Frances Gentle
President



M.N.G. Mani
Chief Executive Officer

Message from The Editor



Dear ICEVI Colleagues and Friends,

In this issue of *The Educator* you will find information on the program for the World Blind Union – ICEVI Joint General Assemblies in Madrid, Spain, June 28-30, 2021. The final program, including a selection of topical webinars, will be available soon and posted online.

Also included in this issue are changes to the ICEVI Articles of Association and Memorandum of Association. These governance documents are the product of the last quadrennium's discussions with the Executive Committee and our International Partner Members. An energetic and persistent committee of ICEVI officers and partner representatives has overseen the changes in governance necessitated by ICEVI's vision and mission updates, and these changes were reviewed and supported by the Regional Chairs/Presidents. Delegates to the General Assembly will vote on these governance changes in Madrid. If you have questions about the changes, you may submit them to your Regional Chair/President or forward them to me. I will see that they are presented to the Principal Officers so they can be addressed at the General Assembly.

Also included in this issue are regional reports on ICEVI's response to the Covid-19 Pandemic and how it has affected the education of children with visual impairment and those with visual/multiple disabilities. I am particularly grateful for the article by Melina Rigoni, a teacher from Argentina who describes what is happening in her school. She describes strategies and challenges that are reflected in the regional reports – validating ICEVI's global efforts to address this pandemic's effect on education. Check out additional pandemic-related resources at <https://icevi.org/icevi-covid-19-response/>.

Best wishes and good reading,

Kay Ferrell

Editor

kay.ferrell@unco.edu

The Body with Distancing: An Educational Experience with Children with Multiple Disability During the Pandemic

Lic. Melina Andrea Rigoni

Santa Cecilia School for Children and Young People with Visual Impairment

No. 33, Buenos Aires, Argentina

melrigoni@gmail.com



The Equipo de Atención a la Singularidad (EAS, Team of Attention to Singularity) is a learning program whose fundamental pillars are the socialization and acquisition of knowledge of blind children with multiple disabilityⁱ. Our work experience is conducted in School N° 33 Santa Ceciliaⁱⁱ of special education for children and youngsters with visual disability.

Children that enter the EAS program receive attention from a specialized interdisciplinary team in an individual and/or group modality. The approach for each child is

taken on by an interdisciplinary group of professionals in the areas of psycho-motor development, music therapy, speech and hearing therapy, as well as by physical education teachers, occupational therapists, and teachers specialized in visual disability. These last ones are referents for children and their families and they work on specific areas with each professional in accordance with each child's needs. The team has the support of one teacher psychologist, one educational psychologist, and one social worker, and the permanent collaboration of assistant caretakers. We hold weekly

meetings among team members and monthly meetings with supervisors from Dra. Carolina Tobar Garcia Children and Youth's Hospital (a neuropsychiatric hospital for children and teenagers). Our task is also articulated with health and/or therapeutic facilities, depending on each child's associated pathology. Furthermore, the team provides counselling to institutions that take on children externally by paying regular visits to these institutions.

The contact with the families is carried out continuously, either through individual and/or group meetings, or workshops and shared activities. We promote areas of exchange between EAS students and other children in the school so as to facilitate the insertion of the student with multiple disability into different school spaces such as recess, school events, educational outings, etc. Every Friday, different activities are carried out in the school's neighborhood, with the goal of enabling moments for learning that challenge children to interact with their surrounding world, their actors and protagonists.

The goals of the EAS are as follows:

- To create a space of learning that encompasses the following areas: the sensory-motor area, the communication-socialization area, and the self-reliance and knowledge area.
- To provide points of reference that allow students to organize their world.
- To stimulate and motivate the child to communicate with their environment.

- To provide the child with functional means so that they can act in their environment as regards their daily activities and routines.
- To create spaces that enable the acquisition of psycho-motor and musical experiences.
- To offer experiences of motor interaction and of handling of objects to develop symbolic representations and cognitive skills.

Every time a child enters the program, we strive to create a connection with him/her and his/her family. We seek to identify the objects and activities that he/she likes because we consider this is a powerful key for learning. During this search, we try to anticipate what is going to happen verbally and physically as the child goes through the process. We keep a coherent and predictable routine, which allows the child to anticipate the next activity and to shift from one activity to another; this, in time, increases their self-reliance. We promote opportunities for choice making as a strategy to stimulate active participation. We conduct interviews with the children's families and caretakers to interpret their non-verbal behaviors. Some children are very clear regarding their likes and dislikes while other show almost imperceptible cues (a slight change in body posture or an increase in body tension). We always give them the opportunity to decide whether they wish to participate in an activity or not.



Moreover, once a week, children go to a swimming pool, for this can be very beneficial to them. Therapy in the water is an optimal tool to facilitate the sensory integration of stimuli, which in most cases for these children is disrupted. On the other hand, this therapy fosters a decrease of the level of separation anxiety and allows for the creation of personal connections and socio-communicative exchanges with their teachers and peers. Through water, the children experience sensations that give them the possibility to reduce tension, to organize their behavior, to connect with their surroundings, and to achieve states of relaxation, which favors sleep cycles. This therapeutic intervention contributes to the development of motor coordination and improves muscle tone and balance, which promotes postural and motor control. Securing this space was a great accomplishment for the EAS. Unlike the "Swimming Plan," that applies to the rest of the student body in the school, where swimming instructors work with children, for children in the EAS program, each child

enters into the water with a member of the team along with the physical education teacher's coordination.

As of March, 18ⁱⁱⁱ, when compulsory quarantine was decreed in our country and we stopped going to school, every member of the team's staff started to make use of virtual resources to communicate with the students and their families. We resorted to apps such as WhatsApp, Zoom, Facebook, and Google Meet. It is important to clarify that the school does not have a paid platform to carry on this task and that, in some cases, homes do not have wi-fi services.

At the beginning, the quarantine brought great confusion: How would we make a connection with our students through a screen? How would we have an encounter with EAS children without being physically present? Our daily task means using the body permanently as a mediator and support so as to accompany, accommodate, and interpret these children, who, in most cases, do not speak. Even though we had always worked with parents and other referents through meetings, workshops and other activities, we would now have to rely on them more than ever; without their help, our intervention would not be possible.

This year, 14 children are participating in the EAS, nine of which were placed in small groups and five were taken care of individually. Their age range goes from 5 to 13 years old. I am the teacher of the group

with the youngest ones. They were born blind and they have been diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. This year they were scheduled to go to school Monday to Friday from 9 to 12, because the EAS works only in the mornings. In the afternoon, some children go to a Therapeutic Educational Center.

One of the children in my group is a son of Chinese parents, and his mother, with whom he lives, does not speak Spanish. The others come from low-income families that live in slums (informal settlements characterized by massive building of precarious substandard housing). I am pointing this out because, more often than not, since the beginning of the pandemic, the social emergency has prevailed over the needs of the education sector, and, in this case, the school has also responded, by sending out milk, diapers, medicine, and other items in addition to the food bags the city government sent out^{iv}. Regarding this, Lic. Karina Arch (2020) stated that “the situation during the pandemic has brought many variables to the forefront that were previously put in the back burner or otherwise neglected or made invisible. The outbreak of this pandemic made crudely visible the obstacles that were already present before, but were somehow hidden in the school life at the time of carrying out the teaching processes in diversity”^v.

I had an advantage over some of my fellow teammates because I had already been the teacher of this group last year, so I already

knew the children and their families. Other teammates joined the school this year, so their contact with students before classes were suspended and have been scarce to nonexistent.

Autism severely affects person's social interaction and communication skills. Children with this disorder often exhibit stereotyped movements, a resistance to changes in their surroundings, routines and the people they interact with, and an unusual response to sensory experiences. When referring to the link between autism and sensory disorders, Tallis (2018) states that.

Congenital blindness often occurs as a consequence of pathologies that can damage the nervous system, being these pathologies also a possible cause of autism disorder. When a child does not have any neurological manifestations nor related risk factors, it is difficult to move away from the hypothesis that their blindness has affected the possibility to form an adequate connection.... Not only does a person use their eyes to see, but also to communicate. As Fiorella states: a baby that does not see, does not look at others and is therefore less looked at, less touched or talked to, there are no signs of mutual attention, people do not know how to play with them and, thus, the baby is somehow abandoned, not properly stimulated and has disturbances in his/her emotional

development. Children who show deficits in the relation with their parents withdraw into themselves, accentuating their emotional disorders and they stereotyped behaviors.”^{vi} (p. 35)

In the families I work with, the cellphone is used almost constantly as a mediator in their relationship with the child. Instead of talking to, singing to or lulling the child, they use the music player to entertain or calm them. How could we repurpose this same tool? Our task no longer had to be centered on the child, as happens in the school, but on the connection between the child and the adult with whom we are communicating.

Regarding the student with Chinese parents, we have called upon a translator and used Google Translate services to communicate with his mother, sending her songs and stories (in Chinese and Spanish) as well as some videos with activities carried out only using gestures and mimics. However, due to other problems related to the pandemic (complicated housing conditions combined with the mother's discontent about not being able to travel to her home country), the communication has not been entirely fluent. On the other hand, we have kept contact with the other families on a daily basis by sending activities and making phone and video calls.

The activities sent out by the team, in audio recording or video formats, were of different kinds: psycho motor activities

(games involving textures, games with blankets, relaxation exercises), activities of everyday life (asks related to body hygiene, simple recipes, arts and crafts to do with the family), physical education activities (motor stimulation through games using the body), musical activities (songs, percussion with different objects and with the body), games, musicalized stories, tutorials, and so forth. Before the winter holidays, small sensory boxes containing various items with different textures, sounds, and smells were sent out as well.



In addition to this sustained exchange, at the beginning of the month of September, virtual meetings were held with the families to learn about their situation after six months since the preventive and compulsory social isolation (ASPO^{vii}) was decreed. During these meetings, inquiries were made regarding the children's health, nutrition, sleep rhythms, and hygiene habits. The goal was to know the parents and caretakers' opinion about this new modality of interaction, and from then on, my group's families and I began holding

meetings every two weeks, together with the speech and hearing therapist and a music teacher.

These meetings are held via phone and video call. During these, we do our work based on the needs expressed by the families (such as the pursuit of better communication with their children) and on the team's observations (such as the difficulties related to nutrition and stereotypical behaviors); we also do our work based on the situations that arise spontaneously during the exchange. Additionally, every week, a musical get-together is held and all EAS children are invited.

We EAS members continue holding weekly meetings and monthly supervisions with the objective of exchanging experiences and searching for better ways to reach out to the families. We are aware that virtual meetings are far from being as effective as the face-to-face meetings held at the school; however, we believe that, bearing in mind the current circumstances, we must adapt to this new modality of teaching and continuously research new strategies.

Families take the proposals in very well and show much appreciation for the daily contact with the school. However, the video, audio, and photographic feedback I request from my student's families are rather scarce: Very often parents message me to tell me stuff about their daily lives: that their son/daughter lost his first tooth, that he/she

can now stand up with their help, or that he/she is walking more autonomously. Regarding this, I believe that this new modality implemented during the pandemic can be intrusive to the homes. Sometimes, the families feel compelled to show themselves on camera, but later feel uncomfortable because they do not want to be exposed. For example, one of the mothers said that she is only willing to make phone calls but not video calls, because she felt embarrassed to show the place where they lived.

Conclusion

During the times of the pandemic and considering that both the educational community and the families, to a greater or lesser extent, have been affected, the school attempted to provide some form of shelter of social and emotional support – a space where there could be a fluent exchange of words, which in time could relieve discomfort. We find ourselves in an unprecedented situation in which all of us started to learn on the go and where we have just recently been able to assess, after taking action, whether the way we proceeded has been adequate or not. Teamwork has always been fundamental in this program, but lately, it has become increasingly relevant because it allowed us to create a space of exchange and support, which was very much needed to overcome the frustration and to come up with strategies for a joint approach.

Bearing in mind that we are facing a situation that turned teaching and learning processes more complicated and that both children and their families are living in an environment of social and emotional vulnerability, it was paramount to reduce the level of uncertainty, anxiety and unreasonable expectations and to point out specific and concrete needs.

Even though, the EAS program, due to its specific features, did not perform virtually in the same way as it would have face to face, we have been able to keep the connection with the children. We continue accompanying the families, strengthening our bonds, and letting them know that the school is still there and that they can count on us.

-
- ⁱ “Multiple disability” is defined as “all limitations of activity or participation, that originate in the conjunction of two or more disabilities with such a degree of severity that they affect a person permanently, preventing them from functioning in their daily lives within their physical and social environment” (Delia Góngora & Nora Sinópoli: 2nd Argentine Congress on Disability in Pediatrics. Autonomous City of Buenos Aires – Sept 27, 28, 29, 2012. Communication in Multiple Disability). The specialists specified that multiple disability generates alterations in communication, in the access of information about their surroundings and in mobility. The person living with this disability needs broad and extensive support in all areas and throughout their lives.
 - ⁱⁱ The School N° 33 Santa Cecilia of Special Education for Children and Youngsters with Visual Disability is a public and free institution dedicated to the education of blind children. It is located in the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, Argentina. It offers the following services: Early care, Preschool, Primary Education, Inclusion to mainstream schooling, EAS, Orientation and Mobility courses, skills of daily life courses, Physical Education, ICT (the use of technology in devices such as computers and cellphones), and English language courses. Additionally, it provides inter-institutional counselling and management, braille courses for parents, and a cafeteria service.
 - ⁱⁱⁱ Classes had begun on March 2nd.
 - ^{iv} Bags sent out by the government twice a month.
 - ^v “Disability and education, detecting barriers in the field of education.” Virtual Seminar. Specialization Course on Social Studies and Disability. Universidad Católica Argentina. November 2020.
 - ^{vi} Tallis, J. (2018). La hipótesis biológica del autismo. Mitos y realidades [The biological hypothesis of autism. Myths vs. realities]. In J. Tallis (Ed.), *Autismo infantil, lejos de los dogmas* (3d ed.) (pp. 15-51). Miño y Dávila.
 - ^{vii} This was the name given by the National Government to the period during the pandemic in which everyone had to remain locked down in their usual place of residence, being able to move around and get out only for short distances and only when it was essential to do so to supply themselves with cleaning supplies, medicine, or food.

Improving Educational Outcomes for Learners with Visual Impairment in Kenya Through Visionary Learning

Martin Kieti, ICEVI Africa
m.keiti@iceviafrica.org

‘Visionary Learning’ is an expression adopted by ICEVI and its partners to describe an approach that deploys technologies for the education of people with visual impairment. The approach is built upon three pillars: **Kit** – the gadgets and devices that learners need to read and write; **Content** – the instructional materials that learners need in a range of accessible formats; **Confidence** – the skills and training that learners require to be able to use devices and learning resources confidently. Visionary Learning seeks to integrate these three pillars into a comprehensive strategy that facilitates multi-agency collaboration in the provision of quality education to learners with visual impairment through a shared goal.

The first attempt to crystalize Visionary Learning was made in 2017 when ICEVI, working with the DAISY Consortium and several other members of ICEVI, developed a project concept note for its implementation in ten countries in Africa. Unfortunately, the necessary resources could not be raised. An advisory team consisting of representatives from ICEVI global, ICEVI Africa, DAISY Consortium, Sightsavers and, later, Benetech, continued to work towards scaling down the project and piloting it in at least one country.

Kenya was identified as a country with potential for a good start. The country had ratified the Marrakesh Treaty and implanted it in its copyright law, creating exceptions for the production, sharing and cross-border exchange of accessible format copies of published works, which, if well exploited, would significantly increase access to printed materials by people with print disabilities. In addition, the country was noted to have a lot of organisations - governmental and non-governmental - working within the visual impairment sector.

It was also observed that Kenya was already one of the leading countries in Africa that were deploying digital technology in the education of people with visual impairment. This included the establishment of computer labs, training of learners and trainees with visual impairment on the use of computers, distribution of freely available e-content and, in some cases, provision of digital devices to learners and trainees with visual impairment.

It was, however, observed that, despite this amazing response to the Marrakesh Treaty and the rich organizational resources available within the visual impairment sector, there lacked a shared purpose and goal as well as mutual approach to collaboration and complementarity among the actors. This was already causing duplication, misrepresentation and organizational friction. The absence of a shared goal had also started to show signs of misdirected efforts.

In early 2019, the advisory team resolved to facilitate a coordinated approach to the deployment of technology-based solutions in the education of people with visual impairment in Kenya. In consultation with local stakeholders, a national workshop was proposed to facilitate consultations and discussions on a Visionary Learning Initiative that would facilitate efficient and effective utilization of the rich technology resources available in the country's visual impairment sector towards a shared common goal. Unfortunately, due to the outbreak of COVID-19, the workshop could not take place.

Nevertheless, a technical team that had been established to coordinate the workshop continued to work on Visionary Learning for Kenya. The team consisted of representatives from ICEVI Africa, Sightsavers, DAISY Consortium, Benetech, Kilimanjaro Blind Trust, and Kenya Institute for the Blind. Its first task was to carry out a situational analysis of the country and collect vital information for planning purposes. This information is summarized below.

Kit: Kenya has a liberal import environment that allows for technologies to enter the country easily. Mobile phone penetration is one of the highest in the world and increasingly, electronic reading and writing devices for people with visual impairment are making their way into the hands of beneficiaries. For instance, the Orbit Reader 20 is now being integrated into the education system with significant success. The Orbit Reader is distributed by the Kilimanjaro Blind Trust Africa through an ambitious program to provide each learner with visual impairment in primary and secondary school with their own device. Unfortunately, these devices are still unaffordable for people who wish to purchase them and their maintenance remains a challenge.

Content: The Kenya Institute for the Blind is a government institution responsible for the adaptation and production of educational materials for learners with visual impairment. Though the Institute has prepared and adapted most of the textbooks for primary and secondary schools, these books are only available for production in Braille and cannot be rendered into other accessible formats. Even where some of the publishers and suppliers are distributing books in electronic formats, these are not accessible. The same is the case for higher education academic books which are also

not available in accessible formats. The scarcity of books in accessible formats is not only limited to academic literature: There is very little non-academic content that has been produced and distributed in accessible formats in the country.

Confidence: Over the past few years, an increasing number of organisations and institutions have been providing computer training to people with visual impairment. These trainings target learners within the schooling age as well as out of school people. Unfortunately, there is no standard curriculum or training course available and each institution conducts its trainings based on its own curriculum. This poses a challenge on quality and recognition of the certification offered by these institutions, especially when the graduates need to use these certifications for employment purposes.

Based on the detailed information collected, the technical team developed a draft three-year Visionary Learning Strategy for Kenya whose goal is to improve educational outcomes for learners and trainees with visual impairment in Kenya by implementing the Visionary Learning Approach. The Strategy specifically aims at increasing the availability of technology-based kits and trainings for learners with visual impairment; increasing the availability of academic and non-academic content in accessible formats for people with print disabilities; and enhancing confidence among persons with visual impairment on the use of technology-based solutions.

The Strategy is built upon the foundation of the Marrakesh Treaty and aims to bring the benefits of the Treaty into the education of learners with visual impairment. In addition, the Strategy builds upon the work of the many actors within the visual impairment sector in the country and taps on their existing programs and resources, directing them towards a common goal. To achieve this, the Strategy establishes a Visionary Learning Network of Kenya, a loose network of organisations and institutions working within the sector. Two virtual meetings of stakeholders have been held so far to discuss the Strategy and the proposed Network. With the financial support from Sightsavers and the Kenya Institute for the Blind, a workshop will be held in early 2021.

Under the auspices of the Visionary Learning Initiative for Kenya, several milestones have already been reached. The distribution of Orbit Readers in schools has been accelerated and discussions are underway for a flexible purchase program of Orbit Readers for users outside school. Other devices like the Dot Mini are now being introduced in schools and an experience centre has been set up for the public to interact with the various assistive technologies available for people with visual impairment.

Agreements have been signed with Benetech and the Accessible Books Consortium to increase access to published works through Bookshare and the Global Book Service. The creation of accessible format copies of educational and other local publications has also started. These milestones will not only increase the number of cross-border content available for Kenyans with visual impairment; it will also increase the number of local publications available in accessible formats locally and internationally.

Institutions that provide ICT training to people with visual impairment have agreed to develop a national Adapted ICT course that will have a standardized examination and certification process. Webinars on Accessible Reading have been delivered and several trainings, including on the creation of accessible documents have also been conducted. Induction of publishers on accessible publishing is expected to take place in the near future.

Once the Visionary Learning Network is established and functional, the technical team will hand over the implementation and management of Visionary Learning to the Network and will assume a more advisory role. With guidance from the advisory team, the technical team will be focus on replicating Visionary Learning in another African country. Already, some aspects of Visionary Learning are being supported in a number of other countries.

COVID 19: Impact and Responses

- ICEVI Europe Report

Stephen McCall, Treasurer, ICEVI-Europe

s.mccall@bham.ac.uk

(Representing English speaking countries: Ireland, United Kingdom, Israel)

Introduction

The pandemic has impacted severely on people with visual impairment across Europe and the on services that seek to support them. The region has been particularly hard hit over the past year and many countries are facing a second or third lockdown as their governments struggle to contain the virus and its new variants.

In these hard times, services concerned with the education, welfare, and inclusion of people with visual impairment face unprecedented challenges. In our report we aim to identify some of these key challenges and to document how organisations and services have responded to them in the first few months of lockdown. We have provided input from a number of countries, but we start with a case study of responses from a country in the English speaking region – Israel.

The study looks at how four different organisations working across the age range were challenged by the pandemic in the first few months of its arrival and how they responded. The organisations have continued to adopt and change their practice as the pandemic has escalated. The organisations are listed below along with their main areas of focus.

- 1. Migdal Or:** A multi-service center engaged in functional, vocational, emotional and social rehabilitation of people with blindness or visual impairment of all ages.
- 2. ELIYA – Association for Blind and Visually Impaired Children:** An organization for the care and advancement of blind and visually impaired children from birth to age six, as well as for children with additional developmental challenges.
- 3. Aleh, The Society of Blind and Dyslexic Students in Israel:** An association that helps blind and visually impaired people in Israel of all ages, from early childhood to senior citizenship, with a focus, though not exclusively, on providing assistance in education and higher education for the blind and visually impaired in Israel.
- 4. Ofek Liyladenu - Israel National Association of Parents of Children with Visual Impairments.**

Case Study - Part 1

Online services - from crisis to challenge and opportunity at Migdal-Or (Lighthouse)

Oded Bashan, CEO, Migdal-Or and
Rita Lapid, Manager of professional quality and development

About Migdal Or {Lighthouse}

Migdal Or is a multi-service center dedicated to advancing people with blindness or visual impairment towards independent functioning and inclusion in the workplace. Active in Israel for over 60 years, Migdal Or provides a broad and comprehensive response through a continuum of services nationwide, delivered at our four regional branches as well as in the home and work environment of the service-receipt.

In 2011, Migdal Or merged into the Northern Goals Association, one of the largest non-profit organizations in Israel's northern region. This move sought to improve Migdal Or's sustainability by taking advantage of Northern Goal's solid fiscal and organizational infrastructure, allowing Migdal Or to continue its work, expand existing services and develop new ones.

Every year, more than 3,000 individuals of all ages and from all sectors and backgrounds benefit from Migdal Or's unique continuum of programs and services, most of which are funded by the Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs' Service for the Blind, the National Insurance Institute and the Ministry of Defense.



Migdal-Or's vision is that every person with vision loss in Israel should be able to fulfill themselves.

Our mission is to develop and provide professional services that are relevant and innovative, improve functionality, support professional advancement for people with vision loss and provide an information service for those involved with their lives (e.g., family, employers, IDF, as well as the general public).

Challenges Arising from the COVID-19 Crisis

COVID-19 has interrupted our daily lives. We are faced with uncertainty and have had to make great changes in the way we manage every aspect of our lives. The family framework is changing: Everyone is at home and we need to adjust to a new reality.

Working conditions vary, many now work mostly online, rules on public transportation are changing. In fact, the familiar routine has been undermined and it is necessary to create a new one, adopting new strategies and tools in order to function in the new reality.

However, challenges for people with visual impairment are compounded during this period, way beyond those of sighted people. These challenges accentuate feelings of loneliness and difficulties in accessing services are illustrated in the following examples:

A person with visual impairment needs to draw close to objects in order to see them, however today, government rulings require distancing. This is difficult for the person with low vision. For example, the need for social distancing makes it problematic for the population with visual impairment to obtain assistance when walking in public spaces. Mobility outside the home is challenging, too. A large number of people with visual impairment use public transport to travel from place to place. During COVID-19, public transport has been reduced and where it does exist, there is fear of infection. As a result, people may shut themselves in their home and feel lonely.

Moreover, a large percentage of people who have decreasing vision are over 65 years. This population is in the high risk category for COVID-19. Sometimes, they are isolated in their homes and may find it difficult to get support. The general feeling of loss and loneliness is intensified among people who have only recently experienced significant deterioration in their vision and are still trying to cope with the loss. This intensifies feelings of helplessness, incompetence, and fear.

These and other challenges during the COVID-19 crisis required Migdal-Or - as a leading organization in Israel – to respond in accordance with our vision and mission. We had to quickly develop a variety of responses to the new needs and demands whilst maintaining regular operations. We were also required to make adjustments to the routine face-to-face services and to train the service providers, in order to provide an effective and safe online service.

The Needs

The needs were examined from two perspectives:

1. Through telephone contact with service recipients in order to assess their needs and the possibilities of continuing with services online in light of the new situation
2. A national assessment of the online needs of people with blindness or visual impairment in Israel. The link to a survey was posted on Migdal-Or's website and sent to past users. Further, in order to access the population that has difficulties with

digital systems, volunteers were recruited to contact past users and review the questionnaire with them.

What needs were identified?

- **Functionality and information:** People with visual impairment raised the need to become familiar with online tools which would enable them to function independently on a daily basis to access various services and support their personal well-being. For example, training in the use of Zoom for working online to replace help with orientation and mobility on route to their workplace; ordering groceries online; accessible games for children; use of assistive technological online applications; adjustments of support methods such as seeking guidance when walking while maintaining distance; adjusting the timings for online instruction acknowledging it is difficult to concentrate for long periods; managing options for camera-dependent platforms such as use of the background, aiming the camera at the target, and so forth; internet connection and troubleshooting smartphone/computer problems.

This information was also requested by family members and professionals that support an individual with visual impairment.

- **Social needs:** Difficulties in receiving occasional help in the public arena, use of public transport, and the fact that leisure services such as enrichment activities, leisure time, recreation and other activities, were reduced at a time when family members and children were continuously at home raised the need for leisure services and social interaction.
- **Emotional needs:** Social isolation, inability to move about freely and uncertainty as a result of the COVID-19 situation significantly heightened emotional stress. People felt apprehensive and lonely, and depression, helplessness and inability to function independently raised the need for social workers experienced in the field of visual impairment and the need for access to group support from peers.

Mapping identified needs and segmenting services provided

In order to respond to the changing needs that arose during the COVID-19 crisis, routine services that had traditionally been provided face-to-face were adapted to online. In addition, new online services were developed. Funding, for the most part, was provided in Israel by the Administration for People with Disabilities at the Ministry of Social Services and the National Insurance Institute.

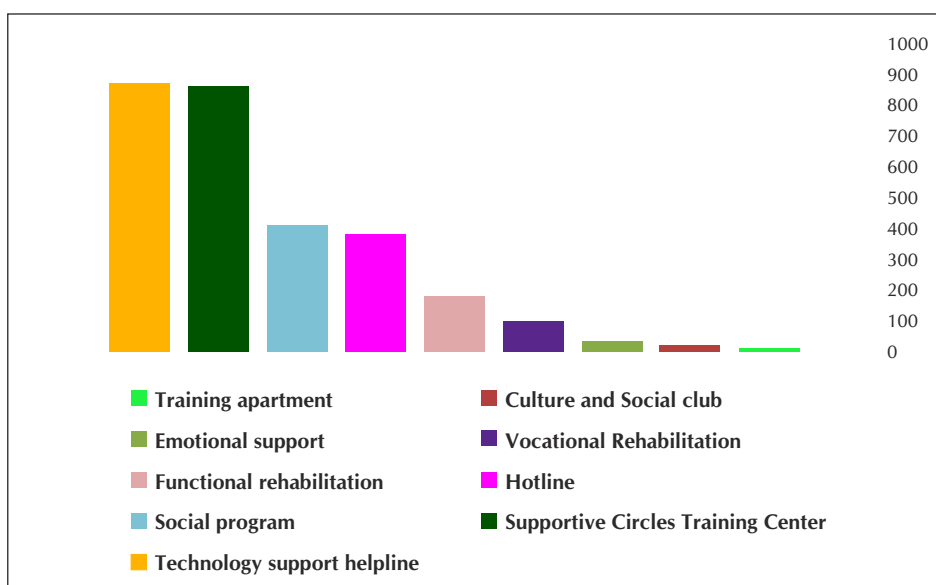
- **Functionality needs:** Functional rehabilitation was adapted online and carried out by Migdal-Or's Units for Rehabilitation Training Services and the Training Apartments for Independent Living.

- **Emotional support:** This was led by the staff of the Institute for the Rehabilitation of Low Vision, which adapted to online support groups. In addition, a new helpline opened for individual support.
- **Vocational rehabilitation:** Training and preparation for employment has been adjusted to online delivery.
- **Social and leisure:** Online leisure services were provided by Migdal-Or. In this framework, we began a variety of new activities such as yoga and exercise, Mindfulness and Guided Imagery, therapeutic gardening, crossword puzzle groups, science for children, and enrichment lectures on a variety of topics.
- **Information/knowledge:** Distribution of information to people with visual impairment, their families, and professionals were adapted for online and via Migdal-Or's Training Center. Subjects included tools for using online platforms, digital accessibility, and assistive technology. In addition, webinars and related materials were saved for practice and further reference in an online resource page on Migdal-Or's website.
- The increased need for technical support was accommodated by reinforcing the existing technological support Call center.

What are the Online Services?

Migdal-Or's online services began in mid-March during the first wave of COVID-19 and some continue today.

Below is a chart showing online service needs during the first three months (mid-March to end of July).



In total, 2,896 people with visual impairment received online services: 2,257 people with visual impairment and 639 people in their lives (family members, care givers, social workers, etc.) who wanted to enrich their skill set of working with people with blindness or visual impairment.

Some people participated in one activity, some participated in weekly sessions. For example, a person who participated in 10 sessions of the online support group was counted only once in the chart, which means that people enjoyed many more hours of activities than shown in the chart above.

Insights

Following our experience with providing online services in a variety of areas, we learned services can be improved based on a number of principles.

1. Principles to improve online services

- **Adaptation of online platforms to the individual.** It is important to offer a number of platforms to enable the user to participate in the selection of one most suitable for them. Those utilized included Zoom, regular telephone, WhatsApp video, Skype, distribution of materials (pictures, files and short films) via email and WhatsApp.
- **Length of sessions:** Online sessions should be shorter than face to face sessions. It is difficult for most people to concentrate for long periods during online meetings.
- **Guide/Companion:** For specific issues, it is important to enlist a companion and determine their role in advance. Their role can help the recipient to practise skill acquisition, with video recording so that the service provider is able to view how learning is carried out, for technical solutions, and to ensure the safety of the recipients. For example, when the rehabilitation teacher is teaching skills online that involve risk such as learning pouring or cutting with a knife, the recipient could make a mistake and the supervision of the guide becomes critical in preventing accidents. The guide needs to understand their new role and accept it. Coordinating expectations is important.
- **New ethical issues:** Online services also bring ethical issues which need attention, for example, recording a session with knowledge of the participants. It is recommended that this is discussed with the recipient in advance and a clear agreement is reached.
- **Verbal guidance:** Online services involve a significant amount of verbal guidance.

Open questions should be frequently asked. This is to compensate for the fact that the service provider often does not acquire the complete picture even on Zoom.

- **Setting goals for sessions:** Clear and limited goals should be set for each session and successes should be clearly recorded. Highlighting goal successes will raise self-esteem and a sense of capability for recipients and service providers alike. In addition, it will also provide clear information as to where to proceed and where there is still difficulty. To do this correctly, it is necessary to base every activity on task analysis.

2. Challenges and Dilemmas

In online service provision, there are challenges which raise professional dilemmas which should be considered:

- **Absence of a complete and immediate picture:** one needs to take into consideration that the service provider does not have a complete and immediate picture when the service is being rendered with regards to the technique offered and the implementation carried out by a person with visual impairment. The guide and use of pictures resolve this in part.
- **Blurred boundaries:** when the service provider uses Zoom from their home, in effect, they enter the home of the recipient. Therefore, a quiet room should be maintained that preserves the privacy of the service recipient with a respectful and appropriate Zoom backdrop. For example, a bedroom is not appropriate but if it is the only option, appropriate background images can be used that do not attract attention.
- **Fatigue:** Online services often makes the service provider and service recipient very tired. It is advisable to take this into account in order to schedule breaks between the sessions in advance.
- **Technology:** Consideration must be given to people's comfort with technology and internet interruptions.
- **Changing perception:** Change usually arouses fear and skepticism in most people. Many services, in particular rehabilitation training services for people with visual impairment, have for many years been provided face-to-face. Learning techniques enabling functional independence are often learned through demonstration and touch. The adjustment to providing services online requires a change in belief and perception that this is indeed possible, efficient and effective. Moreover, it requires creativity in resolving new dilemmas, making adjustments and support for future research.

SUMMARY

Online services remain with us in part. The question is if it is as efficient and effective as face-to-face services. In order to respond to this, we need to understand the difference between the two concepts “efficiency” and “effectiveness.”

“Efficiency” measures the ratio between outputs and resources (i.e., whether the same output is achieved faster with fewer resources). That is: efficiency refers to maximum effort within a minimum time.

Within these parameters, online services are indeed efficient as part of our services in Israel (such as rehabilitation counselling). They are provided in the recipient's natural surroundings and save travel time of the counsellor. It is also possible to save waiting time for services. At the same time, online services are less efficient when demonstrating a new topic. Sometimes, verbal explanations, short films (etc.) take longer to understand than face to face demonstrations. However, for some people the fact that online services take longer to cover a topic thoroughly is an advantage, it helps them feel confident, develops their independence and increases their sense of competence. Nevertheless, for most service recipients, online services will require more time to achieve the same results as face-to-face.

“Effectiveness” measures whether the activity achieves the desired results. The degree of effectiveness is measured against the desired results for short, medium, and long-term impact. It measures the degree of achievement of goals and objectives.

Online services are effective from a number of perspectives. The service encourages the recipient to problem-solve independently, due to the fact that the service provider is not physically present during the learning process. The approach is based on the personal strengths of the recipient and encourages drawing on these inner resources which raises their sense of capability. It also requires significant participation on the part of the recipient which raises self-worth. However, it demands precision in setting limited goals for each session so that the recipient is able to clearly see progress and feel empowered.

In addition, some people, do not utilize services if they are required to leave home and sometimes travel long distances (such as leisure and social activities). There are many reasons for this, such as fear to leave home with visual or other disabilities, general health, lack of accessibility in outside surroundings, frequency of public transport, geographical distance. Online services make activities accessible and allows anyone who is interested to access them at home.

At the same time, online service is less effective for certain service recipients when personal connection is critical to success, when body language and touch are especially important, and when proximity is critical for maintaining safety such as learning to cross at a junction. Sometimes, online services are not possible when a recipient does not have access to technology and/or a companion who accompanies them to sessions and/or in cases where the recipient is unable to cooperate using this method.

Our recommendation is to examine the method of service delivery in accordance with the content and character traits of the recipient and in cooperation with them. We also recommend to balance between online and face to face services depending on the type and topic of service.

Case Study - Part 2

ELIYA – The Association for Blind and Visually Impaired Children Adapting to COVID-19

Hanit Cohen, CEO and
Prof. Kenneth Koslowe, OD MS FCOVD-A
Director, Professional Services



ELIYA is Israel's leading organization for the care and advancement of blind and visually impaired children, and children with additional developmental challenges. Founded in 1982, ELIYA now serves populations in centres throughout the country, from its first and central location in Petach Tikvah, to Jerusalem, Rehovot, Beer Sheva in

the south, and Haifa in the north. ELIYA's focus is on children from birth to age six, in the belief that professional and intensive intervention during these formative years is critical for the development of skills that will help them to successfully integrate into mainstream education and the community at large.

Upon the outbreak of the Coronavirus in March 2020 and following the changes in the operation of ELIYA's Day Care Centres as a result of the Ministry of Health guidelines, we were forced to adjust our working method with the children in our Day Care Centres. In this paper we will present the adaptations made during the continuing COVID-19 pandemic. One of the immediate adjustments to COVID-19 was a significant reduction in group activities, which meant that we had to increase the amount of toys, games, arts and

crafts material in all ELIYA's Day Care Centres tremendously – especially the equipment that had to be purchased for the group of very young infants who tend to use the toys and all materials with their mouth. This was mandated by the fact that the requirements imposed by the pandemic increased individual isolated care. In order to allow all children equal opportunity to use the toys without endangering them or causing them any medical harm we had to double and triple the amount of toys, games, and creative materials purchased.

Upon our return to the new routine, we started to work with a computerized system (CRM) that enables work while maintaining distance between staff members, the sending of health certificates – for staff and families – and the monitoring of activities in all ELIYA Day Care Centres simultaneously. The need to embrace digital record keeping and filing had been present for quite some time, but the pandemic has accelerated the process much sooner than we expected. The hours of programming and implementation of the system is a complex long-term and expensive project. The implementation involves significant staff retraining to maximize the benefits of the system. In the long run, many manhours of working time will be saved by no longer having to review and scan individual hard copy records, communication between our Day Care Centres will be vastly improved, as will communication between supervisors and staff as well as staff and parents.

Other Adaptation measures include:

- Adapting the sensory aspect of the toys to the visual impairment of the children.
- Preparing creative material and home kits to be used by the children during periods of lockdown and quarantine.
- Increased staff training on adapting our centre-based methods performed by professionals to a home-based method performed by parents.
- Increased staff communication with the parents to properly instruct and follow the home care protocol.
- The fact that all communication with parents is now by ZOOM or telephone, without personal hands-on meetings has also required of us much improved communication skills.
- Increased emphasis on emotional support for the children, their parents and the staff in order to cope with the emotional burdens that COVID-19 added to the "normal" burdens of the visually impaired
- In accordance with the requirements of the Ministry of Health, we were obliged to provide the staff on a regular basis with full protective equipment such as: gloves, masks, protective robes, alcogel and more.

- The beginning of the school year in the middle of a pandemic has also caused changes as parents could not accompany their children into the classroom during the first acclimation period, as they had in previous years, and contact with parents remains more limited.

With the exception of the first month-and-a-half “lock-down,” we have continued to function as a rehabilitative facility and have received children in the regular classroom settings. While at the beginning, regulations and fear limited attendance, it has now returned to normal. It is important to stress that throughout this challenging time, changes have been made, staff has adapted, and we have continued to provide the high level of rehabilitative care that has characterized Eliya during its entire history.

Case Study - Part 3

Aleh Activity During the Covid-19 Period

Dr. Moshe Oved, CEO, Aleh Association



Aleh helps blind and visually impaired people in Israel of all ages, from early childhood to senior citizenship. The focus of the organization, though not exclusively, is on providing assistance in education and higher education, with emphasis on students who have difficulty seeing. In response to the needs of the population we serve, Aleh has expanded its efforts greatly over the past years to address issues such as job promotion in the open market for visually impaired academics, the creation and operation of work experience, assistance to the families of blind children and to the children themselves, the operation of transition programs for young adults leaving the parents' home and graduating from high school towards university, as well as providing assistance to our alumni who have established families, and so on. The range of services we routinely offer includes: an audio library, welfare services and emotional support, tutoring and workshops for groups and individuals, social assistance and enrichment, loaning computer aids, sports activities and much more.

During the Covid-19 period, Aleh continued in full operation, often changing the nature of the activity from face-to-face individual and group meetings to remote meetings with the help of the Zoom App. This pivot helped to assure the safety of all while adhering to the guidelines of the Ministry of Health. A few examples of such efforts include:

1. **Children with blindness and visual impairment.** Utilizing interactive elements on the computer, our mentors remotely assisted their assigned children in educational and play activities. In exceptional cases of emotional hardship resulting from loneliness or financial distress, face-to-face meetings were held with families.
2. **Students with blindness and visual impairment.** As studies for higher education moved to remote learning, individual assistance with activities such as reading and tutoring moved to remote delivery as well. We loaned computer aids to students who did not previously have them to ensure all students had access to Zoom. In addition, we provided technological support as students adapted to using the software.

Individual learning – Two main issues that students faced during this time were adjusting to new online programs such as Zoom in a short amount of time and coping with isolation and loneliness. To address this, we were able, relatively easily, to find teachers and readers who could teach remotely and did not have to travel to the blind student's home.

Group learning – Advice we provided to university teachers on how to teach remotely included reading out the study materials that were delivered to the students, notifying the students who have difficulty seeing about events that occur between the students and the teacher, and recording lessons on Zoom so that the blind students could review each lesson.

Individual and group learning at a distance created emotional distress for many students and as a result we increased mental health assistance services during this period as well as running a hotline to address the inquiries of people in distress.

3. **The Elderly.** Because of the vulnerability of the population, we adhered to guidelines of working remotely. However, in many cases, the elderly who did not leave their homes suffered not just from lack of food and medicine, but from loneliness and mental distress as well. We raised funds and recruited volunteers who were willing to take a risk and go to the nursing homes to assist the elderly with their needs. We also provided this group with auxiliary equipment, especially TMSs, in order to allow them to read independently.

4. **Employees of the association** – Some came to the various offices scattered throughout the country and provided services remotely and some went to individual's homes to assist individuals in distress. The strict precautionary measures taken by the people with blindness as well as the workers and volunteers prevented any cases of Covid-19 amongst the people involved – allowing for continuous care throughout this time.
5. **Audio library** – We transferred audio books to an app on the mobile phone that is accessible to people with blindness.
6. **Sports activity** – Group activities were stopped. The team coaches continued to provide remote training for independent sports activities.

Written by: Dr. Moshe Oved

Case Study - Part 4

The Experiences of “Ofek Liyladenu”: A Look into How COVID-19 Impacted the Services for Visually Impaired Children

Yael Weuiz-Rind, Executive Director



OFEK LIYLADENU

Israel National Association of Parents
of Children with Blindness and Visual Impairments

“Ofek Liyladenu” is the Israel National Association of Parents of Children with Visual Impairments. Right from the earliest days of the pandemic in Israel, Ofek Liyladenu reorganized its services and adapted them to meet the emerging needs on the ground. In mid-March Israel went into lockdown and we managed to conduct surveys among parents about the situation in early April and early May. The main findings were:

1. Most parents reported that there was no regular personal contact with low vision support teachers, with no face-to-face teaching or meetings.
2. Communication was limited to receiving written materials and WhatsApp messages.

3. Many children found the use of ZOOM challenging and technical training and instruction were unavailable.
4. Regular and subject teachers were not aware of the issues of making teaching accessible to students with via ZOOM (e.g., the need for early preparation of materials, managing participant responses and muting, etc.). In addition, how lengthy screen use caused eye fatigue, headaches, and other bodily complaints.
5. Many of the teachers were not aware/familiar with Ministry of Education guidance.
6. There were hardly any personal workplans for the visually impaired children.
7. On many occasions assistive technology remained in closed schools.
8. Distance learning was not supported with individual assistance.
9. Parents reported lack of clarity regarding Matriculation exams (e.g., what would be the format, scope etc.).

After conversations with the Ministry of Education most of the above issues were addressed.

With the ending of the lockdown and a return to something like routine in the education system we conducted another survey and additional issues came up:

1. Examination formats in distance learning were not adapted for visually impaired children.
2. Physical and spatial changes to school environments were not properly introduced and familiarized to students with visual impairments.
3. Partial return to routine extracurricular activities (e.g., after school clubs and courses) caused distress and frustration.

In general, the uncertainty and restrictions of physical contact and touch created anxiety and emotional regression.

With the opening of the new school year in September the education system was better prepared and low vision support teachers were regularly supporting the children. The latest developments include a second lockdown which began three weeks ago, and we are following and monitoring the situation.

European Regional Responses to the Covid Pandemic

BALTIC AND NORDIC COUNTRIES

DENMARK

Education in Denmark during the Covid Pandemic 2020

Dorthe Marie Degn

Institute for the Blind and Partially Sighted, Jan. 2021

In Denmark most children and young people with a vision impairment attend mainstream schools and education establishments. The municipalities, schools and families can access assessments of needs and specialized support through the Refsnæs Sight Centre. The Institute for the Blind and Partially Sighted (IBOS) offers a range of support to education centers and to students in further and higher education, including assessment and advice on reading and study skills, ICT, counseling, and so forth.

As part of the Covid restrictions, home schooling for children and home working for adults has been extended until March 2021. Although it could be said that Denmark has benefitted in the pandemic from being a highly digitalized society, there are still big challenges to do with accessibility that remain to be solved.

STU – Specialised Youth Education

Both Refsnæs and IBOS also offer a three-year individually specialized education, called STU, for young people aged 16-26 who have multiple disabilities (typically cognitive and vision impairments) and who can't benefit sufficiently from mainstream education programmes. As part of the Covid 19 restrictions, special guidelines that are subject to ongoing local adaptations were published regarding children and young people with special needs. During this Spring, youngsters with complex needs were sent home for a shorter period than children in mainstream education and although they had shorter hours of online learning, they received increased calls from their tutor, and they returned sooner than others to IBOS. During fall 2020 they remained at IBOS, keeping strictly to hygiene, distance, and other guidelines. Their teachers must wear a mask or visor and be tested each week. Only close staff are allowed into to their separate areas, they have an allotted time in the dining hall, and other facilities. As a result of these measures and some good luck, no pupils or teachers at IBOS have tested positive so far.

Mainstream School Teaching during Covid

Since March 16th, 2020 a lot of educational activities in mainstream schools have changed to online, with children participating from home to minimize Covid infections. Pupils, parents and teachers have faced challenges in learning how to use new media and finding new ways to plan, coordinate and deliver teaching and learning.

The responses have been both positive and negative. For some children support from parents with their home schooling has been positive. Their parents became more aware of how subjects were taught in school and more engaged in their children's homework, and other school functions. Teachers have in general received great praise for their abilities to quickly deliver high quality teaching in new ways, inventing new online pedagogies while teaching. In general, high social morale was maintained during the spring and people worked together to counter anxiety and loneliness (e.g., through the creation of togetherness events online).

During the summer of 2020 when restrictions became fewer, pupils were allowed back to school. Lessons were organized in smaller groups to keep social contact to a minimum and to uphold social distancing. Museums and other institutions opened their facilities for the schools and outdoor classes became popular.

Challenges of Online Teaching in Denmark

As the Covid infection rate grew during the autumn, morale began to fall as activities and schools were closed, and home schooling became necessary again. The long-term effects of social isolation and online teaching has become worrying, especially for vulnerable families and children with special needs.

The Association of Parents of Children with Vision Impairment (LFBS.dk) in their newsletter Øjensynligt, July 2020, describes a typical home schooling day: It starts at 9 o'clock with a Teams meeting, but either the invitation can't be found in the pupil's intranet Aula, or Teams can't be accessed through the screen magnifier or Jaws. Math programs are also a challenge for Jaws and other adaptive software, so the pupil needs a sighted support person at their side, usually the parent. The professional ICT-supporters are also working from home. Some pupils benefit from TeamViewer, which makes it possible to view the users' screen and picture, but it's not good for communication. So even though European law says that public information and webpages should be accessible, and schools, parents and professionals do their best to solve the problems, there are a lot of obstacles to overcome that slow down the children's learning progress and possibilities for participation.

Recently the teachers have called attention to the effects on exams, as the pandemic continues in 2021. About 20 % of all children, according to an evaluation of the emergency teaching during spring 2020, found it difficult to participate in online teaching and learning. Also, for many parents, who at the same time have had to work from home, coordinating workstations and dividing their attention between assisting their children and getting their own work done, has been a source of stress.

Danes haven't been confined from going outdoors, as in other countries, but winter darkness limits outdoor activities after school. For all generations it's the physical and social limitations that have been hardest to live with, and there is a rising concern about the long term effects on psychological wellbeing and health. We remain, however, hopeful that the vaccines for adults will make it safe to enjoy school life, friends and social activities once again this Spring.

SWEDEN

Information from Resource Centre Vision, The National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools (SPSM)

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the whole of society, and has impacted on schools, teaching and the children and students we serve. We have continued providing support, but have adapted our methods of working in order to comply with the authorities' recommendations for slowing the spread of infection. Since March 2020, we have been providing courses, counselling and support digitally. Our interdisciplinary assessments, which often involve travelling to preschools and schools, have been forced to be postponed indefinitely. In the meantime, we offer in-depth counselling online.

FINLAND

Like most pupils, visually impaired pupils have mainly been learning through distance education,. The Valteri Centre for Learning and Consulting offers support for learning and school attendance to pupils, their families and staff working closely with them. As consultation visits were not possible, support was provided remotely (e.g., through Google Teams).

THE BALKANS

BULGARIA

Both the schools for visually impaired pupils in Sofia and Varna moved quickly to remote and online teaching and managed very well to maintain the learning processes of children with VI and MDVI.

The Rehabilitation Center for people with VI in Sofia and Sofia University are working together, exchanging IT knowledge and information in order to support VI university students in their remote and online education.

ROMANIA

Schools for pupils with visual impairment in Romania experienced many challenges, but educational and rehabilitation activities were able to continue in an online form. Teachers, sometimes with the support of parents, managed to organize activities to develop knowledge and abilities in pupils. Technology and equipment were sent home to enable learning activities to continue.

TURKEY

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected Turkey like every country in the world very significantly in terms of the accessibility to education. Children with visual impairment and MDVI and their families face challenges in accessing distance education.

CENTRAL EUROPE

SLOVENIA

All schools were closed in March and distance learning started almost immediately, with itinerant teachers providing support virtually. Pupils up to the age of 15 returned to school in May 2020 along with the students in their final years of secondary education who were due to take national school exit exams. In May the support for mainstream schools restarted, and our itinerant teachers were able to attend primary schools but not secondary schools.

In September 2020 schools restarted for all children, and the support for children in mainstream schools was performed in the usual way. However, in response to the serious health situation in October 2020, firstly secondary schools were closed and resumed distance learning, and for the primary schools and special schools autumn holidays were extended and then distance schooling started for them as well. As of December 2020, all pupils and students are still working from home. Special schools are closed as well, which has brought many problems for families. All support to mainstream schools is now provided virtually. During the summer holidays and in September special attention was paid to developing ICT skills so that children and their parents are able to use different platforms (Zoom, MS Teams etc). Particularly blind pupils and students needed extra lessons.

However, it is difficult or impossible to realise some parts of extended curriculum (e.g., orientation and mobility training, daily living skills training, training of social skills, etc.) when distant learning is taking place. A lot of parental support is needed and sometimes it is difficult to provide, especially when parents are working from home as well or when they are not able to stay at home with their children. The efficiency of distance learning is especially questionable for children with MDVI.

THE CZECH REPUBLIC

All services were affected. In the Spring 2020 lock down, all schools closed, education moved online, and parents had to take care of most education of primary school pupils. Resource centres for the visually impaired supported pupils remotely through phone calls and video conferences, and early intervention services continued their work from home and the office, supporting children and families by phone, video conferencing, and online seminars.

In Summer and Autumn schools for children with special needs and kindergartens were open, but then closed for two weeks in November.

Children with visual impairment in mainstream schools had to cope with online education, with less support from classroom assistants. All of them missed contact with their classmates and leisure time activities. Parents were, and still are, overloaded with teaching their children.

Since May, early intervention work has largely remained online although contacts with client families are conducted in accordance with their wishes, either face-to-face, online, by phone or through e-mail. There is increasing need for psychological support.

HUNGARY

The School for the Blind: Our school used all possible channels to deliver online teaching and support including: FaceBook, Viber, phone calls, messenger calls, chat rooms, Google Teams, and Zoom. We also provided materials and textbooks in Braille to children at home. We tried to keep in touch with all of our students, but their level of access to IT equipment varied greatly according to their social background.

For children in mainstream schools, the ELTE Support Office for Students with Special Needs (SHÜTI) made huge efforts to teach students how to use Zoom and Google Teams with screen readers and created a Facebook group for supporting students in issues related to online education.

POLAND

The COVID 19 pandemic affected the activities of all government and non-government organizations and institutions. Education moved to online teaching and special schools reported having to discontinue training in the area of mobility and independence skills. Online teaching affected in particular young learners with a visual impairment, as not all of them have access (or the necessary skills) to use specialist equipment.

Parents of a totally blind child in a mainstream school reported difficulties with their child's full participation in online lessons involving graphics (geometry, geography). Online teaching did not have a serious negative effect on students with a visual impairment in higher education. and practically all universities and colleges have services that provide adaptations of educational materials.

EASTERN EUROPE

ARMENIA

Armenia and Georgia, as reported by the representatives of these countries, canceled all events in connection with the pandemic.

AZERBAIJAN

The celebration of the Day of Disabled People due to the COVID-19 pandemic has been canceled in educational institutions throughout the country.

BELARUS

Throughout 2020 questions about the training and teaching of persons who are visually impaired have been discussed with the leadership of the Belarusian Republican Association of the Visually Impaired.

GEORGIA

Armenia and Georgia, as reported by the representatives of these countries, canceled all events in connection with the pandemic

KAZAKHSTAN

In Kazakhstan, the work of educational institutions, including special schools, is carried out according to a mixed visiting schedule.

RUSSIA

Organizations promoting the development of inclusion have been actively using webinars, including webinars on mobility and on information access for pupils and students with visual impairment.

ENGLISH SPEAKING COUNTRIES

ISRAEL (see country case study above)

THE UNITED KINGDOM

The effect of Covid on education in the UK has been profound. From March to September 2020, mainstream primary and secondary schools were effectively closed with only a handful of children of key workers and special needs children attending. Special schools have also been severely restricted and most closed their doors to students for health reasons. Although children with visual impairment (like other children) have been sent programmes of work through the internet and have received support through telephone calls, their learning often depends on whether their parents have the knowledge, skills, and time to support them at home.

Specialist Further Education Colleges for students with visual impairment closed between March and September and moved their delivery during this period from face to face to online teaching. At Queen Alexandra College this move was very successful and had many positive benefits in terms of increasing staff skills in online teaching, but some students have found the lack of social contact very isolating and require a lot of support from parents to engage with work.

There also have been huge challenges for teachers of the visually impaired in assessing student performance in national examinations, assessing new students for entry to schools and further/higher education, and making arrangements for students who are in transition to new places.

It is generally very hard for students with VI and additional learning difficulties to understand and comply with the rules on social distancing and mask wearing. Social distancing for students who are totally blind is a challenge even if they don't have additional needs.

On the plus side the government guaranteed normal funding for Schools and Colleges, even though most students have not been attending in person.

The impact has also been great on training for teachers of the VI. Birmingham University normally has residential weekends for its distance learning programme, but these have been moved to online events with video lectures and demonstrations. This has proved popular with students because of the flexibility it gives in timing these studies, but it makes practical sessions such as training in mobility very difficult. The opportunities to work together in groups and to share ideas and learn from other people's experiences is also much reduced. For other teacher training centres that don't already have distance learning delivery models, the situation has been even more very difficult to manage.

Since September schools and Colleges have reopened in the UK and most are managing to operate well within social distancing, study "bubbles" and the use of personal protective equipment (PPE). Even so classes and year groups are often sent home to quarantine when cases of Covid occur.

IRELAND

Childvision, the National Education Centre for Blind Children, organised a virtual national summer programme for children with visual impairment to replace the annual face to face event held at the Centre. A wide range of activities was available, including drama sessions, Mindfulness, sports, and baking sessions. See more at [Virtual-Summer-Programme-PDF_opt.pdf \(childvision.ie\)](https://www.childvision.ie/Virtual-Summer-Programme-PDF_opt.pdf).

FRENCH SPEAKING COUNTRIES

FRANCE

In spite of government help, the first period of lockdown during which schools closed for around 2 months proved very difficult. Children with visual impairment missed the social interactions of school, access to adapted learning materials and support from specialist teachers. In addition, their parents were often working from home (teleworking). A lot of districts (both local and national) tried to make available online resources for parents and teachers but only some were usable with students with VI.

<https://eduscol.education.fr/2016/ressources-numeriques-educatives>
<https://www.reseau-canope.fr/actualites/actualite/covid-19-des-ressources-pour-assurer-une-continue-pedagogique-a-la-maison.html>

For students with visual impairment:

<http://www.ash91.ac-versailles.fr/wp-content/uploads/sites/39/2020/03/Podcasts-pour-enfants-DV.pdf>

<https://www.inshea.fr/fr/content/ressources-en-ligne-pour-la-continuité-pédagogique>
<http://gpeaa.fr/continuons-a-partager-nos-experiences/>

Specialist teachers made a lot of use of the telephone, the internet, online platforms, WhatsApp, and more to keep in touch with students, their regular teachers, and parents. When they could, they tried to send documents printed in braille or raised drawings. Depending on teachers', families' and students' situations, the support has sometimes been effective and sometimes not. Some schools were only open for only a few days before summer, due to the Covid situation.

Public theatres put some accessible plays online and there have been a lot of online concerts too. Public radio played a lot of educational podcasts containing stories, for example: <https://www.franceinter.fr/emissions/les-odyssees>
<https://souffleurs.org/soufflage-a-distance/>

Theatres offered appointments with actors who volunteered to read poetry and parts of plays over the phone and answered questions. These sessions were totally accessible and provided a very personal and aesthetic experience for sighted and visually impaired people.

Here is a Zoom concert Bolero of Ravel, audiodescribed: <https://www.apidv.org/Le-Bolero-de-Ravel-par-l-Orchestre-National-de-France.html>

Some associations provided online physical education sessions (mainly for adults).

An emergency aid platform has been created for parents of children with disabilities: <https://www.grandir-ensemble.com>

A "back to school" after lockdown guide edited by the national association of parents of blind children was also produced.

http://anpea.asso.fr/site/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Retour-école_élèves-DV_Fiche-pratique.pdf

In spite of all those initiatives, the pandemic still poses many difficulties regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities: for example, depending on the stakeholders' interpretation, students who normally attend both a special unit and an inclusive school remain in their special unit to maintain social distancing, and this puts a brake on inclusion. Particularly for blind students, Social distancing or "touch prohibition" is proving particularly difficult rule for students who are blind.

BELGIUM

For further information go to:

<https://www.braille.be/fr/a-propos-de-nous/actualites/2020/04/covid-19-et-handicap-visuel-questions-frequeemment-posees>

https://www.rtb.be/info/societe/detail_les-personnes-aveugles-et-malvoyantes-souffrent-de-mesures-sanitaires-inadaptees?id=10570537

UN award for “Stories on the phone” for Ligue Braille <https://www.braille.be/fr/a-propos-de-nous/actualites/2020/07/la-ligue-braille-recompensee-par-les-nations-unies-pour-histoires-au-bout-du-fil>

SWITZERLAND

Recommendations for People with VI in the pandemic:

<https://www.sbv-fsa.ch/fr/prestations/conseils-corona>

COVID 19: Impact and Responses

ICEVI Latin America Report

Cristina Sanz, ICEVI Latin America Regional President

latinoamericaicevi@gmail.com

During January and February of 2020, ICEVI Latinoamerica and the Latin American Union of the Blind (ULAC) were preparing the Latin American Congress of the Blind, the Expotiflo 2020 and the 2nd Regional Conference of ICEVI Latinoamerica that were supposed to take place in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, from 23rd to 27th March. Because of the coronavirus, on 11th March the WHO declared COVID-19 as a pandemic. As a consequence, in-person classes were immediately suspended at every level and lockdown was implemented. Therefore, ICEVI Latinoamerica conducted all the activities on-line for the whole year, since the pandemic is still expanding throughout the region.

Another consequence of the pandemic was that the joint activities with ULAC were postponed, initially for October 2020, and then to March 2021.

1. Activities organised by ICEVI Latinoamerica:

March:

On 26th March, when the Regional Conference was supposed to take place, the Regional President met on-line with the members of the Board to approve Resolution N°4 which extends the term of office of ICEVI Latinoamerica's authorities until October 2020. The Board also decided to work together with the ONCE Foundation for Latin America (FOAL) to get to know the problems arising from COVID-19 in the different countries of the region, for which FOAL allocated an extraordinary budget of 30,000 Euros. The Board also decided to provide on-line training activities because all in-person activities have been suspended in all countries.

April:

- During April the new Dissemination Team, coordinated by Gladys Correa and formed of Hazel Garro and Angel Espinal, was put in place. The previous Dissemination Coordinator, Norma Toucedo, worked with them to achieve a smooth transition.

- A questionnaire to get to know the situation and needs of the countries in the region because of COVID-19 was elaborated. This questionnaire was disseminated through our networks and the results were shared with FOAL.
- On 7th, 9th and 10th April the first series of webinars was conducted, titled “Elaboration of Accesible Documents for Blind and Low Vision Students.” The expositors on 7th April were: Cristina Sanz (Aim of the On-Line Training), Enrique Quiroz (Criteria When Planning the Digital Education of People with Visual Impairment), Elizabeth Campos (Accessible Texts in MS Word Documents), and Salvador Angeles (Accessible Documents in Digital Formats). The expositors on 9th April were: Salvador Angeles (Screen Readers: Suggestions, Advantages and Disadvantages), Hazel Garro (Importance of a Clear Methodology for Digital Content for Students with VI) and Rosario Galarza (Accessibility as Paramount Condition for the Right to a Quality Inclusive Education). The expositors on 10th April were: Enrique Quiroz (Platforms and Devices to Access Digital Education), Gladys Correa (What to Achieve in the Digital Education for People with Visual Impairment), Cristal Vargas (Importance of a Quality Digital Training for Employability) and Julio Canizalez (The Challenge in Front of Us and the Path to Work Together). Four hundred thirty-one (431) people were enrolled in these webinars.

On 21st, 22nd, and 24th April the second series of webinars was conducted titled “Some Guidelines for the Production of Adapted Material and Pedagogic Suggestions for Teachers of Students with Visual Impairment.” The expositors on 21st April were: Pablo Lecuona, Tiflonexos (What is a Braille Transcriber?) and Inés Lengua Flores, FOAL (From Cobra to E-Braille). The expositors on 22nd April were Juan José Della Barca (Important Criteria for the Transcription and Printing Scientifics Texts in Braille), Miguel Gavilanes (With which Programmes and How to Elaborate Synthetic Audio Materials) and Miguel Martín Suesta, FOAL (What are Braille Lines: Main Uses). The expositors on 24th April were: Eduardo Badilla Mora (How to Elaborate Tactile Graphics in a Braille Printer), Luis Almonte Pichardo (How can Teachers Benefit from Screen Readers in the Education of Students with Visual Impairment), and Luis Alpízar sobre (Didactic Guidelines for Teaching Physics and Chemistry to Students with VI). Eight hundred eighty-four (884) people were enrolled in these webinars.

May:

On 28th May the webinar “O&M Techniques in Times of Pandemic” was conducted, coordinated by Norfa Frez and with the expositions of Professors Marcela Carrasco (Santiago, Chile), Cristóbal Villalobos (Concepción, Chile) and María Hermiña Suñé (La

Plata, Argentina). Fifty-four (54) professionals participated in this webinar. As a result, a technical document on Orientation and Mobility and a series of recommendations were elaborated. These documents were distributed to all members of ICEVI Latinoamerica and were also translated into English to be uploaded to [ICEVI's website](#).

June:

- Because schools have been closed since March in most countries of the region, a technical document on inclusive education was elaborated by ICEVI Latinoamerica's Board. This document outlines the barriers students with visual impairment face and some suggestions to overcome these barriers. The document was disseminated throughout the region, and translated into English to be uploaded to [ICEVI Global's website](#) . It was also sent to regional representatives from international organisations.
- On 26th June, a Webinar for Higher Education Students was held: 18 students with visual impairment from 18 countries participated and shared their experiences on virtual and on-line classes during COVID-19 times. The webinar was conducted by Rosario Galarza.
- On 30th June, the Board of Directors of ICEVI Latinoamerica approved Resolution N° 5 that extended the term of office of ICEVI Latinoamerica's authorities until March 2021. This Resolution of the Board was disseminated throughout the region.

July:

- On 10th July the first Webinar on arithmetic was conducted and it was coordinated by Cristina Sanz. There were expositions by professors Julio Canizález, Juan José della Barca, Ema Montenegro de Rossel, Miriam Jorge and Gabriela Solano, and 16 mathematics teachers participated in the webinar.
- On 23rd July the second Webinar on arithmetic was conducted and it was coordinated by Cristina Sanz. There were expositions by professors Julio Canizález, Juan José della Barca, Ema Montenegro de Rossel, and Miriam Jorge, and 11 mathematics teachers participated in the webinar.

August:

- On 6th and 13th August, the Virtual Meeting of Rehabilitation Professionals who Work with Young People and Adults with Visual Impairment was conducted. Cristina Sanz was the moderator, Norfa Frez and Julio Canizález were the speakers, and Gladys Correa made a brief report of the meeting. Thirty-seven (37) professionals from 14 countries participated in this meeting.

- On 25th and 31st August the webinar “Opportunities and Challenges for High-School Students with Visual Impairment during COVID-19” was conducted, moderated by Rosario Galarza.

September:

- On 5th September, ICEVI Latinoamérica, the Venezuelan Federation of Institutions of the Blind, and the Venezuelan Braille Council, conducted the webinar “Teaching of Mathematics for People who are Blind or have Low Vision.” Julio Canizález and Gleydi Oropeza represented ICEVI Latinoamerica.
- On 25th September the webinar “Teaching Geometry to Pre-school, Elementary School and High-School Students with Visual Impairment” was conducted, moderated by Juan José della Barca. Cristina Fuentes, Susana Mazzei, Miriam Jorge and José Eduardo Badilla were the speakers. Eighty (80) professionals participated through Zoom platform, and 20 participated through Facebook Live.

December:

- Within the framework of the Call “Children Tell Us: The School at Home” made by ICEVI Latinoamerica, we received 35 stories written by children between ages 8 and 17 from 10 countries in our region. From these stories, 17 belong to the First Category of the contest (8-10 years old), 6 belong to the Second Category (11-13 years old), and 12 to the Third Category (14-17 years old).
- Within the framework of the Call “The Relevance of the Braille System in the 21st Century?” made by ICEVI Latinoamerica, we received 19 articles written by professionals from 12 countries in our region.
- On 3rd December the Virtual Commemorative Activity of the Day of People with Disabilities took place, together with the Launch of ICEVI Latinoamerica’s web site. The activity was moderated by Gladys Correa, the message by Dr. Frances Gentle, President of ICEVI Global, was read, and Estefanía Mirpuri Merino, FOAL’s Director delivered a message as well. Cristina Sanz presented about Working Together We Can Reach More During the New Normality.” Julio Canizález presented and overview of the web site, and Hazel Garro provided a description of the web site.

2. Activities in which ICEVI Latinoamerica was invited to participate:

May:

- On 12th May, Julio Canizalez delivered a presentation through Facebook Live in an activity organised by Red Cross and AGORA El Salvador. He highlighted the importance

of the cleaning and sterilisation of the tiflotechnology tools that people with visual impairment use daily, to prevent the COVID-19 virus spread.

June:

- On 11th June, the Chair participated in the Webinar “Inclusive Education, a Challenge during the COVID-19 Emergency (Section 24 of the CRPD, SDG 4),” speaking about the main barriers that students with visual impairment and deafblind students encounter when trying to have access to quality education, and how to reduce these challenges. The webinar was organised by RIADIS (The Latin American Network of Non-Governmental Organizations of Persons with Disabilities and Their Families), IDA (International Development Association), and CONSORVEN (Confederación Sordos de Venezuela).
- On 20th June, Julio Canizález participated in an on-line meeting with FOAL's Volunteers to discuss the status of inclusive education in Latin America in times of COVID-19.
- On 26th June, the Chair participated in the webinar “Reality of the Education of People with Visual Impairment in Honduras, in times of COVID-19,” and she spoke about the technical document on inclusive education.

July:

- On 15th July, Julio Canizález was invited to a radio interview by the CONADIS of Guatemala, and he spoke about the challenges of inclusive education and access to on-line education for people with visual impairment in times of COVID-19.
- On 24th July, Julio Canizález presented on the Webinar of the Committee for Deaf and Blind People of Guatemala on the topic “Applicability of Technologies for People with Visual Impairment in Times of Pandemic.”
- On 29th July, Cristina Sanz presented on the challenges of education due to COVID-19 in the webinar “Promoting Inclusive Education in Times of COVID-19” organized by the World Blind Union (WBU) and ICEVI Global. Approximately 300 people participated in the webinar.

August:

- On 7th August, FEVIC Venezuela organised a chat forum, “Proposals for Granting an Inclusive, Equitable Quality Education for People with Visual Impairment in Accessible and Efficient Learning Environments.” Julio Canizález presented on the challenges of on-line education and how to overcome them. Approximately 350 participated through WhatsApp groups.

- On 26th and 27th August, the representatives of ICEVI Latinoamérica, Julio César Canizález, Gladys González, and Mariel García, presented during the Virtual Meeting: Learning about Visual Impairment. Julio and Gladys spoke about Human Rights and Disability, and Mariel García spoke about Sports and Games as Learning Styles.

September:

- On 3rd September the Chair participated in the I International Congress of Human Rights, organised by Ius et Veritas and co-organised by ICEVI Latinoamérica. She presented on the Round Table “Virtual Educative Services for Students with Special Educational Needs.”
- On 23rd and 24th the virtual workshop “Leaving No One Behind, the Role of the Resource Centres for Students with Visual Impairment during the Pandemic Context” took place, organised by the Ministry of Education and Professional Training of Spain (MEFP), OEI and FOAL, with the support of ICEVI Latinoamérica. Julio Canizález and Cristina Sanz presented in the workshop.

October:

- From 1st October to 6th November, the web seminar “Building Realities from the Education and Re-education of Children, Young People and Adults with Visual Impairment” took place every Thursday. The Seminar was organised by the Inclusive Education Department of the Ministry of Education and Sciences of Paraguay, with the support of ICEVI Latinoamérica and FOAL. On behalf of ICEVI Latinoamérica, the presenters were: Gabriela Rovezzi (Good Practices in School Services for Students with Low Vision, 1/10); Julio Canizález (Tiflo Technology as a Way to Access Adapted Information for Specific Requirements, 8/10); Susana Mazzei (Educative Support Strategies, Support during Virtual Lessons and Accompaniment, 15/10); María Herminia Suñé (Training Strategies for Orientation and Mobility Taking into Account Social Distancing and Recommendations of the Sanitary Protocol, 22/10); Mercedes Carmen Horisberger (Strategies, During The “New Normality”, for Training in Daily Life Activities, 29/10); and Veronica Rivas (Empowerment through Rights from Childhood for People with Visual Impairment, 6/11).
- From 6th to 8th October, the Seminar “For an Education without Barriers,” organised by University Andrés Bello, El Salvador, took place. Crystal Vargas, Julio Canizález, Cristina Sanz and Rosario Galarza represented ICEVI Latinoamérica with their presentations. Approximately 215 people participated during the three sessions.
- On 15th October, to commemorate the Day of the White Cane, the webinar “Importance of Orientation and Mobility and the Use of the White Cane for a

Professional with Visual Impairment” took place, coordinated by the Panamanian Institute of Rehabilitation (IPE). Gladys Correa delivered a presentation about the Importance of rehabilitation, and Julio Canizález delivered a presentation about the White cane, both in representation of ICEVI Latinoamerica.

- On 15th October, Susana Mazzei and Cristina Fuentes, in representation of ICEVI Latinoamerica, participated in the virtual training: “Adaptation and Elaboration of Mathematics Teaching Materials for Students with Visual Impairment (in Elementary and High School)” organised by the Ministry of Education of Peru. This activity was aimed at the coordinators and staff of the Special Educative Needs Support Services (SANEE).
- On the 15th and 16th October, the International Series of Conferences “Education without Barriers and Frontiers” took place, organised by the Local Unity of Educative Management of Cajamarca, Peru, with the support of ICEVI Latinoamerica. Cristina Sanz, Julio Canizález, and Magaly Vilca delivered presentations on behalf of ICEVI Latinoamerica.
- On 23rd October, Susana Mazzei and José Eduardo Badilla Mora, in representation of ICEVI Latinoamerica, participated in the virtual training: “Adaptation and Elaboration of Mathematics and Science Materials for High School.” This activity was organised by the Ministry of Education of Peru and was aimed at the coordinators and staff of the Special Educative Needs Support Services (SANEE).
- On 28th October, the Chair delivered a presentation on: “Higher Education for People with Visual Impairment” in the webinar Discussion Session Among Allies, organised by CONADIS Peru.

December:

- On 5th December the International Symposium of People with Disabilities organised by the Association of Scientific Organisations of Medicine Students of Colombia (ASCEMCO) took place, with the participation of the Chair who presented on “Role of the health professionals in the care of diversity.”

3. Meetings with ICEVI Latinoamerica’s Allies:

March:

- On 13th March, the authorities of ULAC, ICEVI Latinoamérica, FOAL and ONCE met on-line to discuss the expansion of COVID-19 worldwide. As a result, the decision was made to postpone the Dominican Republic events for 19th – 23rd October 2020. The

Sheraton Hotel agreed to change the dates with no extra cost, and the airlines agreed to re schedule the flights with no cost.

June:

- On 18th June, the authorities of ICEVI Latinoamerica met on-line with ULAC and FOAL, to analyze a new postponement of the Joint Events for March 2021.
- On 19th June, the authorities of ICEVI Latinoamerica met on-line with ULAC and the Host Committee of the Joint Events, to evaluate the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic in Dominican Republic and the new postponement of the events to March 2021.
- On 25th June, the 50th Meeting of FOAL's Board took place on-line. Cristina Sanz and Julio Canizalez participated in the meeting.

July:

- On 28th July, Julio Canizález participated of a virtual meeting with FOAL, the Ministry of Education of Colombia and CONALIVI, to discuss a project for inclusive on-line education.

November:

- On 21st November, the authorities of ICEVI Latinoamerica and ULAC met on-line to discuss the MoU, the events in Santo Domingo 2021, and the joint actions to develop in the region. Julio Canizález, Cristal Vargas, and Cristina Sanz represented ICEVI Latinoamerica.

December:

- On 1st December, the authorities of ICEVI Latinoamerica met on-line with ULAC and FOAL to evaluate the events 2021 in Santo Domingo.
- On 2nd December, an on-line meeting to follow up the MoU FOAL/ICEVI Latinoamerica took place. Julio Canizález and Cristina Sanz represented ICEVI Latinoamerica.
- On 9th December the Scientific Committee of the Events 2021, formed of ULAC (Matías Ferreyra, Carlos Ferrari, Dean Learmen, Marisa Martinez, and Elizabeth Campos), ICEVI Latinoamerica (Cristina Sanz, Julio Canizález, Rosario Galarza, and Gladys Correa) and FOAL (Estefanía Mirpuri), met on-line to make some final arrangements.
- On 9th December Cristina Sanz and Crystal Vargas met with representatives of the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Health of Dominican Republic to talk about the

Events 2021. Of this meeting also participated Estefania Mirpuri (FOAL), Matias Ferreyra and Somalia Soriano (ULAC), and Erasmo Mañon (Host Committee).

- On 11th December Cristina Sanz and Crystal Vargas met with representatives of CONADIS of Dominican Republic to discuss the Events 2021. Of this meeting also participated Estefania Mirpuri (FOAL), Matias Ferreyra and Somalia Soriano (ULAC), Erasmo Mañon (Host Committee).
- During the year 2020, the Chair of ICEVI Latinoamerica participated in the bimonthly on-line meetings of the group Argentina Includes, framed in the Project BAM22 of Perkins International Latin America & Caribbean. The group is elaborating a draft Act of Deafblindness and Multiple Disability to be submitted to Argentina's Congress.

4. Response to COVID-19 situation:

As a consequence of the pandemic and the lockdown that led to the loss of employment, some regional governments provided grants, food and sanitizing items for the most vulnerable population.

Also, FOAL allocated a special budget for covering basic needs and connectivity needs for students with visual impairment in Latin America.

In spite of the efforts made by the governments and civil society, most students in the region couldn't have access to on-line classes. The main challenges were access to electronic devices, knowledge on how to use them, and lack of connectivity.

The great crisis that emerged of COVID-19 has meant a loss in the exercise of fundamental rights, such as the right to education, especially for people with disabilities in our region, even though the organizations of people with disabilities and ICEVI Latinoamerica, made a great effort to seek access to education for children and young adults with visual impairment in this special circumstances.

Today, more than ever, we have to duplicate efforts to advocate for the governments to respond to these situations. ICEVI Latinoamerica seeks to play an active role in granting the full exercise of the rights that assure a better quality of life for the population with visual impairment.

COVID-19 and Mobility for Persons who are Blind

ICEVI West Asia

Compiled and coordinated by

ICEVI West Asia, June 2020

Summary of Recommendations

Moderator Comments: The need for a discussion group arose from a telephone call from a blind woman sharing her concern that, due to the coronavirus, people were not willing to help her when she needed assistance in crossing a busy road in an unknown area. While her question was simple, we had no definite answer. A WhatsApp post was created to invite suggestions regarding the measures that this woman should take to ensure that people came forward with offers of help when she needed to cross the road in unknown areas.

A large number of people from around the world participated in the WhatsApp discussion and shared their thoughts. Based on comments of all the participants, the following recommendations are proposed by ICEVI West Asia.

Recommendation 1:

1.1 Use of a Mobility Cane

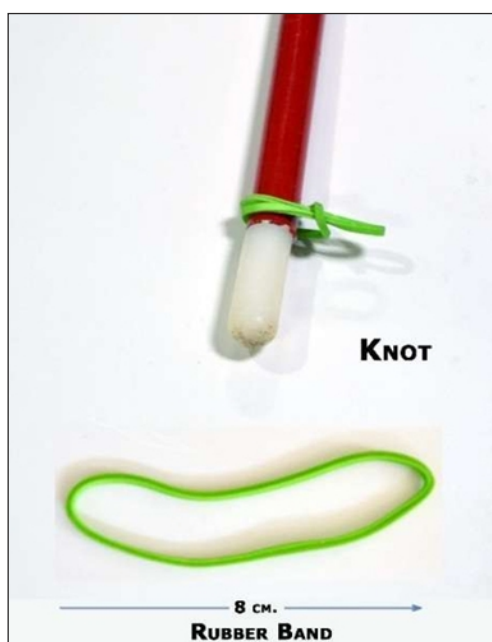
- Use a mobility device, preferably a Smart cane, such as the Torchit (i.e., sensor based handheld object detection mobility device);
- Use a mask and gloves and change the same as needed;
- Always use goggles or other protective eyewear;
- Wash your hands with quality soap or use sanitizer to sanitise hand before leaving and returning to your place;
- Keep a small bottle of sanitizer with you; and
- Regularly sanitise both your hands and long cane.

1.2 ICEVI Mobility Technique during the COVID-19 Pandemic or Other Emergencies

Based on the feedback of respondents, ICEVI West Asia has developed a cane technique named the “ICEVI Mobility Technique.” A video of the Mobility Technique is available on YouTube – go to <https://youtu.be/gmVd6LErp5M>.

We recommend that the blind person follows the following steps while using this technique:

- Step 1 : Ask for help from a sighted person who will be your Guide.
- Step 2 : Take out sanitizer bottle and sanitize the hands of the Guide and yourself by pouring sanitizer first on your palms and then on the palms of your Guide.
- Step 3 : If you use a folding cane, unfold it by yourself.
- Step 4 : Take a tissue paper or clean cloth and wipe the tip of your cane by yourself.
- Step 5 : Take out your packet of 8 centimetre rubber bands and ask the Guide to take out one rubber band from the packet.
- Step 6 : Show the Guide the picture of the knot (picture shown below) that is to be tied on the lower tip of cane - it is best to have the picture on the rubber band packet.
- Step 7 : Request the Guide to tie the knot using the rubber band on the lower tip of your cane, forming a loop for the Guide to hold.
- Step 8 : Ask the Guide to hold the loop of the rubber band in his/her right hand and then move forward; you will follow the Guide holding the hand grip of the cane (resulting in the cane being held vertically between you and the Guide).
- Step 9 : When you reach your destination, ask the Guide to dispose of the rubber band; thank the Guide, and continue along your journey using your cane.



Picture of 8 centimeter rubber band and the knot used to attach the rubber band to the cane with a loop for the Guide's to hold.

Recommendation 2:

2.1 Use of Human (Sighted) Guide Technique during the COVID-19 Pandemic or Other Emergencies

In the standard human guide technique, the blind person follows the basic techniques of human guide, which include:

- Touch technique (for holding and using the cane);
- Hand position (i.e., hold hand just above the human guide's elbow); and
- Distance (i.e., blind person positioned half a foot (30 cms) behind).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, please do not come into direct physical contact with your Guide.

2.2 ICEVI Reverse Human Guide Technique

During such conditions as COVID-19 when maintaining social distancing is mandatory, a new technique called "Reverse Human Guide Technique" has emerged through the comments of participants of the WhatsApp group. A video of the Reverse Human Guide Technique is available on YouTube – go to <https://youtu.be/f5TVjUn684k>

In this technique, the human (sighted) Guide directs the blind person while walking behind (rather than in front) of the blind person. We recommend that the blind person follows the following steps while using this technique:

- Step 1 : The blind person asks for the help of a human (sighted) Guide.
- Step 2 : The blind person explains that the human Guide should give verbal instructions while walking 3 feet behind the blind person.
- Step 2 : The blind person walks in front and the human Guide walks behind, maintaining a distance of 3 feet (approximately 100 cms).
- Step 3 : The blind person takes out his/her long cane and walks as guided by the Guide's instructions.
- Step 4 : The Guide directs the blind person by giving such instructions as "stop, walk slow, move right, move left, turn right, turn left, take right U turn, take left U turn", and so forth.
- Step 5 : The Guide announces when the final destination has arrived, as desired by the blind person.
- Step 6 : The blind person thanks the Guide and continues along his/her journey using the long cane.

Both the standard human guide and reverse human guide techniques ensure that social distancing of 3 feet (100 cms) is maintained, while completely avoiding human touch between the blind person and the human guide. It is important to ensure the complete safety of the blind person.

The cane techniques described above involve the cost of sanitizer, tissue paper, and rubber bands, which are affordable items. There is no cost involved in the reverse human guide technique – it is very simple to follow and has scope for universal application.

Recommendation 3: Other Observations

During the COVID-19 pandemic or other emergencies, a blind person should:

- Avoid unnecessary movement in public places.
- Keep extra bags for items purchased.
- Follow all government guidelines on COVID-19 in respect to lock down, including knowing about containment areas, restrictions on movement, use of public vehicles, social distancing in public places, registration on relevant apps, sanitization of hands while entering public places, and requirements for wearing of masks.
- When speaking with others, do not remove your face mask, but rather speak loudly enough for the person to hear you.
- Listen to the radio, community radio or television for all relevant instructions and other appropriate information.
- See if it is possible to get work from home from your employer.
- Order groceries and essentials items online, and also make payments online.
- Use Google (or other) digital maps wherever possible when moving outdoors.
- Always carry bags, protective gloves, tissue paper, or pieces of rough paper or old cloth with you, and use these items whenever you want to accept mobility help from someone. These protective items can also be used in lifts, on ramps, and whenever and wherever you need to touch surfaces. After use of the protective items, immediately dispose of them carefully in a dustbin or by wrapping the item in a carry bag or another paper to take home with you.
- If you need to go out on a regular basis, try to hire the same vehicle and driver every time. If you have your own vehicle, hire the same driver on monthly payment basis.
- Use sanitizer before and after taking help from someone.

Note: This draft shall be further improved after receiving feedback from mobility experts and blind persons themselves.

Response to Covid by ICEVI West Asia*

Bhushan Punani, ICEVI West Asia Regional President

blinabad1@bsnl.in

*This article is based upon the comments received from Members of ICEVI West Asia and other professionals in the field of education in West Asia.

Effect of Covid on Education

- ✦ In most countries in West Asia, lock-down was declared in the last week of March without any scope for any specific preparations.
- ✦ COVID is an extraordinary situation with hardly any preparedness on the part of Government, NGOs, educational institutes, individuals, and even parents.
- ✦ All residential schools, hostels, and inclusive schools were completely closed. In many cases, students did not even have the opportunity to retrieve their Braille books and audio materials.
- ✦ Even after 4 months of lock-down, the situation is still not clear as to when schools shall open again.
- ✦ In many countries, March is the month of examination, and then June is the month of starting the new session. Thus, neither have exams been conducted nor could students be enrolled for the new session.
- ✦ Educational activities have come to a virtual halt with no hope for restarting of the schools at least for the next 9 months.

Initiatives Taken During Covid

- ✦ Some countries have started teaching students through WhatsApp or Google Meet by developing on-line teaching lessons.
- ✦ In some countries, almost all lessons are now available in audio form for students at Primary to Higher Secondary level.
- ✦ BookShare and Daisy Forum conducted a number of on-line webinars on use of technology for developing and accessing on-line lessons.
- ✦ Experiments are being conducted on teaching Braille online with the involvement of family members.
- ✦ The concept of Braille Quiz has been introduced to promote reading and writing of Braille.

- ⬆ Some countries have developed digital methods of teaching basic computer operations and conducting online computer competency tests.
- ⬆ ICEVI West Asia and Blind People's Association have developed newer techniques of using white cane and human guide techniques, ensuring social distancing and safety of person and the guide.

Challenges

The countries in West Asia fall in the categories of "Developing" and "Least Developed" countries. These countries are facing the following challenges:

- ⬆ Most children with visual impairment come from poor families and their parents are not educated. They are not in a position to afford to purchase a mobile device or obtain an internet connection.
- ⬆ Many villages and towns have limited internet connectivity.
- ⬆ In many countries, the teachers are well equipped with the techniques of preparing on-line lessons or using newer devices for that purpose.
- ⬆ As many educational institutes are being run on public donations or self-finance basis, schools are not able to even pay salary to their teachers.
- ⬆ In some areas with a high incidence of Covid, the teachers are not in a position even to travel to the schools and promote on-line teaching.
- ⬆ Children with visual impairment and multiple disabilities (VIMD) and deafblindness are more vulnerable and will need greater support during and after Covid.
- ⬆ People with particular syndromes are more vulnerable and should be provided care immediately.
- ⬆ It is difficult for many countries in the region to provide counselling to parents and children for removing fears of the disease from the mind of the child.
- ⬆ Teaching of mathematics, Braille, and science subjects to students through on-line methods is very tedious and needs some technological support which in most case is neither affordable nor available, especially to children in the rural areas.
- ⬆ In some countries, even schools for the blind have no access to computers, internet, or such other facilities.

Turning Disadvantage into Opportunity

- ⬆ Because of the emergence of on-line methods of teaching, all material is now available in audio format – a great advantage for students with visual impairment.

- ✦ Parents and family members have started participating in the learning process and understanding of on-line lessons.
- ✦ The system of teaching through Audio, WhatsApp, and Webinar shall become a Universal method that will have long term advantages.
- ✦ The on-line method of teaching is resulting in true inclusion of students with visual impairment.
- ✦ Most parents are coming forward to spend money on equipment and internet connections to facilitate access to teaching material.
- ✦ The use of technology is becoming more prominent.
- ✦ All entitlements for poor people have started including people with disabilities (PwDs), and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) must help them to access the same.
- ✦ The Covid hospital should make special arrangements for the treatment of persons with visual impairment considering their needs for social distancing and mobility.

Post Covid

- ✦ First and foremost, NGOs must lobby country governments that all information on the disease and related guidelines are made available in accessible formats.
- ✦ Educators should provide remedial teaching beyond school hours.
- ✦ All Special Educators should be given orientation in the use of technology, online methods of teaching, and developing a system of interactive on-line classes.
- ✦ Parent or family members should be trained in pre-Braille, Braille, and use of technology.
- ✦ Every child with visual impairment must have access to mobile devices and internet.
- ✦ Volunteers must be utilized for teaching, particularly for non-academic curriculum.
- ✦ If/when vaccine becomes available, children should be vaccinated.
- ✦ Social distancing, health, and hygiene guidelines need to be followed as a matter of routine.
- ✦ The on-line audio material which is mostly available in English and prominent national languages should also be available in regional and local languages.
- ✦ National governments should allocate higher budgets for meeting the needs of children in terms of technology, access to the internet, accessible materials, provisions for social distancing, and such other safety measures, particularly for those children with visual and visual/multiple impairment.

The Challenge for the World Blind Union (WBU) and ICEVI

We are likely to face the following challenges during the post-Covid period:

- ⬆ Studying good practices for online teaching, developing accessible material, and use of technology as it is being followed in developed countries, and sharing the same with developing countries.
- ⬆ Advocating at national levels for meeting challenges of higher budget allocations, true inclusion in teaching, and use of technology at affordable cost.
- ⬆ Identifying best practices during Covid and Post-Covid period in respect to effective on-line teaching and confidence-building practices, and disseminating the same through appropriate means.
- ⬆ Arranging computer and technology related trainings from very junior level classrooms.
- ⬆ Advocating for accessible textbooks and making accessibility mandatory, which may help in self-learning.
- ⬆ Developing guidelines for children/students/adult/parents in accessible formats on prevention measures in pandemic situations.
- ⬆ Developing ways to provide enough educational/non-educational material for children/students with visual impairment to keep them occupied.
- ⬆ Supporting individual abilities and additional needs and learning styles of children and young people with visual impairment to access resources and assistance available for their education and learning development.
- ⬆ Building the capacity of teachers and education providers to enable them to access online resources and training on supporting children and young people with visual impairment remotely, ensuring the continuity of education.
- ⬆ Exploring alternative modes/strategies for those living in villages, rural indigenous communities, and households with no or very limited internet, to provide access to digital devices with affordable data plans, as they are at greater risk of being left behind.
- ⬆ Providing accessible materials and resources to children and young people with deafblindness to support their education, learning, and development, through the development of alternatives to online learning.

Guiding and supporting parents and caregivers to access resources and develop skills to support their children who are learning remotely at home.

Talking Technology

Ben Clare, ICEVI Pacific Regional President

bwclare@gmail.com

Welcome to the second edition of the Talking Technology Column!

I certainly hope you enjoyed our first edition, which explored the accessibility of Zoom, the popular platform used for online meetings and collaboration. Since that column was published, the pandemic has sadly continued on and the use of Zoom is as prevalent as ever in many countries. As 2021 gets underway, hopefully we will see the light at the end of the tunnel and the pandemic lessens its grip on the world.

In this edition of Talking Technology, we will explore some of the vast range of amazing software products produced by the Sao Mai Centre for the Blind in Vietnam, all of which have been produced by blind people for blind people and are available free of charge. This column will review some of these products in brief, describing some of the key features and benefits of using the software. All apps and programs are accessible for use with screen readers and Braille displays.

What is the Sao Mai Centre?

Sao Mai Vocational and Assistive Technology Centre for the Blind, often known as SMCB, was founded in 2001 as part of a large scale assistive technology project, initially funded by the Mantovan Association of Italy. A not for profit organisation, SMCB seeks to empower blind people throughout Vietnam and the world through promoting and developing assistive technology solutions aimed at independent living and working with partners to maximise employment opportunities for people who are blind in Vietnam. The Sao Mai Centre operates in 23 Vietnamese provinces and employs a large number of blind and vision impaired staff who develop assistive technology software, training packages, and provide assistance for employers. In addition to the large number of software applications developed by SMCB, the centre also has a large book library with titles available in many languages.

Supporters of the Sao Mai Centre include the Nippon Foundation, Overbrook School for the Blind, and ICEVI. Visit SMCB's website: <https://www.saomaicenter.org/en>

What follows is a list and brief description of some of the currently available software titles. More information can be found on the Sao Mai Centre website (<https://www.saomaicenter.org/en/smsoft>) and most apps are available for download from the Google Play and IOS app stores. Where applicable, these apps run on Android and IOS devices and some on Windows laptops.

Sao Mai Braille

This simple but powerful Braille translator enables quick production of electronic Braille files from a number of popular document formats. Simply load your standard file into SMB and you will have an excellent Braille translation! Relatively complicated Braille formatting is available, and the program can handle tactile graphics, Math equations, music, and other text styles. Once files are converted with Sao Mai Braille, they can be embossed or saved in BRF for reading on Braille displays and Braille note takers. Utilising the excellent LibLouis translation tables, over 100 languages are available! This software was developed with funding from Overbrook School for the Blind and the Nippon Foundation. For Android users, the SM Braille Viewer app enables Braille files to be translated into print and print files into Braille and which can be read on a connected Braille display or the operating system's inbuilt screen reading software. Braille Viewer supports a large number of popular formats, including ePUB, Word, and HTML.

SM Music Reader

Billed as the first ever free and fully accessible smart phone app for Braille music reading and translation, this program, available on Android and IOS platforms, has some very powerful features for the music lovers among us. As well as being able to translate music scores into Braille that can be embossed or output on a Braille display, music scores can be generated from MIDI sequencing files, meaning people unfamiliar with writing music scores can generate perfect compositions with this app. In addition to an inbuilt guitar tuner and metronome, app users can access a large range of prepared music scores, suiting a number of genres, made available by Sao Mai.

With funding made available by Overbrook School for the Blind and the Nippon Foundation, this is truly a unique app. It's available for free download from the Google Play Store and IOS App Store.

Sao Mai Typing Tutor

Typing tutor programs have been around for years, probably ever since computers came into general use and people got sick of using two fingers to type. There are many, many tutor programs available, nearly all of them inaccessible with screen readers and almost

none are totally free to download and use. Then came Sao Mai Typing Tutor (SMTT). This powerful program takes the student right through the typing process, from beginner to advanced. There are pre-prepared lessons, or you can write your own. Blind users can also learn together with sighted peers and it's easy to keep track of progress. This program works with Windows.

Burmese Text to Speech Engine for Myanmar

This collaboration among Sao Mai Centre for the Blind, Myanmar Assistive Technology Research and Development Centre (with funding provided by ICEVI, Overbrook School for the Blind, and the Nippon Foundation) resulted in a fully functional speech synthesiser for the Burmese language, spoken in Myanmar. This is a very positive step forward for blind computer users in Myanmar where English is not their first language. They now have speech which they can understand, making the learning process so much easier. The text to speech engine can be installed on Android and Windows devices and works as a plug-in to popular screen readers such as NVDA and Google Talkback.

I hope you enjoyed this exploration of some amazing free programs that are available and which can greatly boost productivity and entertainment for the blind computer and smart phone user.

I look forward to your comments and perhaps suggestions for what I can cover in the next Talking Technology column.

Please Email me at bwclare@gmail.com.

Until next time...

Ben Clare

Parent Perspectives

Parents Are Welcome!

Did you know parents of children who are blind, partially sighted, and those with additional disabilities are invited and welcome to participate in the WBU-ICEVI World Blind Summit Joint Assembly, too?

ICEVI holds its international general assembly every four years, and this has been how parents and leaders of parent associations have had the opportunity to meet together through the years, resulting in the founding of the International Association of Parents of Children with Visual Impairments (IAPVI). The ICEVI General Assembly has been the only international forum for parents to meet. We have the opportunity to encourage each other through our challenges, celebrate our milestones and successes, share our ideas, and learn from each other.

Through parents' participation in the ICEVI General Assembly has raised awareness amongst educational and rehabilitation professionals of the importance of parents' involvement in their children's development, education and equity in life. This has encouraged the conference organizers to create a more welcoming program, such that "Parents as Partners" is one of the main themes of the 2020 presentations. There are also many more topics that parents will find beneficial to attend, such as Sports and Recreation, Advocacy, Inclusion, and much more. You can see the program and wide range of topics elsewhere in this issue of The Educator or at the WBU-ICEVI World Blind Summit website (worldblindnesssummit.org).

IAPVI invites you to meet with us online, June 28-30, 2021, to join our worldwide network of parents!

Sincerely,

Susan LaVenture
President of IAPVI

Need for amendments to the 2010 Articles of Association (AOA) and Memorandum of Association of ICEVI

As per the constitution of ICEVI, resolutions if any should be disseminated in advance by the Executive Committee for review prior to voting at the General Assembly and subsequent implementation. The ICEVI formed a Governance Committee in 2018 to lay out guidelines that would strengthen collaboration and networking between ICEVI global and its regions. This has been considered necessary especially in the light of ICEVI regions becoming registered legal bodies. To date, ICEVI Africa, ICEVI Europe, ICEVI Latin America and ICEVI Pacific regions are registered legal bodies and have opportunities to collaborate with regional and international bodies for regional development. The Governance Committee brought out a number of suggestions to improve the overall governance structure and enumerated specific roles and responsibilities for the officers of the organisation. These executive guidelines were reviewed by the Executive Committee in its meetings in 2019 and 2020. The Executive members suggested that necessary amendments to the Constitution of ICEVI should be prepared and shared with voting delegates prior to the General Assembly.

As per the constitutional requirement, these proposed amendments are published in the January 2021 issue of The Educator for wider dissemination. Any member of ICEVI may propose further amendments to the Constitution. This should be done through the Regional President or official delegates of the respective region and will be tabled for voting at the General Assembly.

For the benefit of the readers, the January 2021 issue includes the existing constitution of ICEVI which consists of the Articles of Association (AOA) and the Memorandum of Association (MOA) and also the suggested amendments. These documents will also be sent to the voting delegates by email.



International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment

COMPANY No. 4521195
The COMPANIES ACTS 1985 and 1989

COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE AND NOT HAVING A SHARE CAPITAL

ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION OF INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR EDUCATION OF PEOPLE WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

1. Membership:

- 1.1. Membership of the Council is open to any individual or organisation subscribing to the objects of the Council as laid down in the Memorandum of Association.
- 1.2. Members shall pay an annual subscription as shall be determined from time to time by the Executive Committee. Subscriptions shall reflect the diversity of the financial resources available to different organisations and in the different regions of the Council.

2. Regional Structure:

- 2.1. The basic structure of the Council is a regional one and the members of the Council are primarily members of a region. The Executive Committee shall determine the number of regions into which the Council is divided and the countries making up each region.
- 2.2. The Regional Members shall elect for each term from the region a Regional Chairperson and one or more Regional Deputy Chairpersons. The length of a term shall be as prescribed in the Bye-laws.
- 2.3. The Regional Chairpersons shall be responsible for establishing a Regional Committee of not less than 5 members. Representation on the Regional Committee shall reflect the diversity of the region. The immediate past Chairperson and any Principal Officer belonging to the region shall ex officio be a member of the Committee.
- 2.4. The Regional Committee shall be responsible for the planning and implementation of regional activities and conducting the business of the region in consultation with the Principal Officers of the Council.

- 2.5. The Regional Committee shall have power to levy a regional subscription with the agreement of the Executive Committee.
- 2.6. The audited regional accounts shall be sent to the Council's Treasurer within three months of the end of each financial year.
- 2.7. The Regional Chairpersons, together with the five Principal Officers, are the Officers of the Council.
- 2.8. The Regional Chairpersons shall report regularly to the President on an agreed schedule.
- 2.9. If a Regional Chairperson is unable to fulfil his/her duties, one of the Deputy Chairpersons shall take over by agreement among themselves. If neither the Chairperson nor any of the Deputy Chairpersons is able to fulfil these duties, the Regional Committee in association with the President shall take decisions about the continuation of the region's work.
- 2.10. The Regional Committees shall appoint delegates with voting rights to the General Assembly using a process which respects diversities within the region. The number of delegates per region shall be laid down in the Bye-laws.

3. General Assembly:

- 3.1. A meeting of the General Assembly shall be held at the end of each term.
- 3.2. Those entitled to vote at the General Assembly shall consist of the Executive Committee, not more than two Deputy Chairpersons from each region and the other delegates with voting rights appointed by the Regional Committees in accordance with Bye-law 4.
- 3.3. At a General Assembly, there shall take place a business meeting at which the Regional Chairpersons and Principal Officers shall present a report on their activities during the past term and their plans for the next term. The business meeting shall elect the Principal Officers of the Council, who shall be the President, the First Vice-President, Second Vice-President and the Treasurer. The Immediate Past President is also a Principal Officer.
- 3.4. The General Assembly may also include a professional conference, which non-delegates may attend.
- 3.5. At a business meeting of the general assembly, a quorum shall be one third of the members entitled to be present and to vote.

4. Executive Committee:

- 4.1. The business of the Council between General Assemblies shall be conducted by an Executive Committee, which shall consist of:
 - a) the Principal Officers of the Council, namely
 - ▲ the President;

- ♣ the Immediate Past President (or other person appointed by the Executive Committee if the Immediate Past President is unable or unwilling to serve);
 - ♣ the First Vice-President;
 - ♣ the Second Vice-President
 - ♣ the Treasurer;
- b) the seven Regional Chairpersons representing Africa, East Asia, West Asia, Europe, Latin America, North America/Caribbean, and the Pacific;
- c) one representative of each of the Founding Members of the Council as follows:
 - ♣ American Foundation for the Blind
 - ♣ Perkins School for the Blind
 - ♣ Royal National Institute of the Blind;
- d) one representative of any international non-governmental organisation which supports the objects and plans of the Council and makes a significant financial contribution to its work, the level of such contribution to be determined by the Executive Committee from time to time as part of the dues structure of the Council.
- e) one representative of each of the following:
 - ♣ International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness
 - ♣ Deafblind International
 - ♣ World Blind Union.

The Executive Committee may also invite to any of its meetings the Chairperson of any Standing Committee or Working Group established by the Executive Committee.

- 4.2. The Executive Committee may either ad hoc or for the full term appoint additional members with special tasks who may be invited to participate in meetings of the Executive Committee, but shall have no voting rights.
- 4.3. The Executive Committee shall evaluate regional developments in terms of the Council's policy, the global targets set for the term and regional plans.
- 4.4. The Executive Committee shall keep under review the Memorandum and Articles of Association and the Bye-laws of the Council.
- 4.5. The Executive Committee shall appoint the members of the Programme, the Nominations, the Finance, the Publications and any other global Standing Committees of the Council.
- 4.6. A Regional Chairperson who shall be appointed by the Executive Committee shall act as Chairperson of the Nominations Committee. When a member of the Nominations

Committee wants his/her name to be considered for one of the Principal Officer positions, he/she shall send a letter of resignation to the Chairperson of the Nominations Committee, who in turn will consult the President and have a substitute appointed in the place of the member who resigned from the Committee.

- 4.7. The President is ex officio a member of the Programme Committee.
- 4.8. The Treasurer is ex officio Chairperson of the Finance Committee.
- 4.9. One of the Vice-Presidents shall be the ex officio a member of the Publications Committee.
- 4.10. The Executive Committee shall have power to appoint paid staff in order to further the work of the Council.
- 4.11. At a meeting of the executive committee, a quorum shall be one third of the members entitled to be present and to vote.

5. Principal Officers:

- 5.1. The Principal Officers are the executive officers of the Council who shall act on behalf of the Council and on behalf of the Executive Committee. They shall report on their activities to the Executive Committee and the General Assembly, and shall meet as necessary. Three shall be a quorum.
- 5.2. Each of the Principal Officers, in addition to the duties of their post, shall have specific duties as agreed amongst themselves from time to time.
- 5.3. Each Principal Officer is authorised to act on behalf of the Council on condition that the action is based on the Memorandum and Articles of Association or Bye-laws of the Council; its policy, custom and practice; or a decision of the Executive Committee or of the Principal Officers.
- 5.4. If the President is unable to discharge his/her responsibilities, the First Vice-President shall take over responsibility from the President. If for any reason he/she is or becomes unable to do this, the Second Vice-President shall take over.
- 5.. The Secretary General will normally be in attendance at meetings of the Principal Officers and Executive Committee unless asked to withdraw while matters relating to his/her position as Secretary General are discussed.

6. International Consultative Committee:

- 6.1. The International Consultative Committee is an advisory body to the Executive Committee. It is intended to promote global co-operation and linkages between global organisations active in the education of people with visual impairment.

- 6.2. The Executive Committee shall draw up a list of organisations that will be invited to serve on the International Consultative Committee. These organisations shall meet the conditions laid down in the Bye-laws.
- 6.3. The Executive Committee shall meet at least once each term with the International Consultative Committee. These meetings shall discuss the Council's general policy with a view to promoting co-operation and linkages with the invited organisations.

7. Terms of Office:

- 7.1. All office holders shall take up their positions at the end of the General Assembly at which they were elected. Elections or appointments taking place between General Assemblies shall have immediate effect.
- 7.2. All office holders shall remain in post until the end of the next General Assembly after their election or appointment.
- 7.3. Ad hoc appointments shall come to an end when the task for which they were made has been completed, but in any event not later than the end of the next General Assembly after they were made.
- 7.4. Regional Chairpersons and International Members of the Executive Committee should normally serve for no more than two full terms.
- 7.5. No Principal Officer shall serve in the same position for more than two full terms, not including any unexpired portion of a predecessor's term.

8. Alternative Methods of Decision Making:

- 8.1. With the prior agreement of the President, a member of any organ of the Council may validly participate in a meeting of that body through the medium of telephone or video conference or any other form of electronic communication equipment, provided that all persons participating in the meeting are able to hear and speak to each other throughout such meeting. A person so participating shall be deemed to be present at the meeting and shall accordingly be counted in the quorum and be entitled to vote. A resolution passed at any meeting held in such manner and signed by the Chair of the meeting shall be valid and effective as if it had been passed at a meeting of that body duly convened and held.
- 8.2. A postal ballot may be used for deciding any question which requires decision within any organ of the Council. Ballot papers, clearly stating the proposal to be voted on, shall be sent to all persons entitled to vote on the matter in question. All means of written communication may be used."

9. Finance:

The Council's financial year runs from 1st January to 31st December. The accounts of the Council shall be subject to annual audit by a qualified auditor and the Principal Officers shall appoint an external auditor for the purpose. The audited accounts shall be presented to the Executive Committee who shall have responsibility for approving the financial report. The Executive Committee shall also approve the annual budget of the Council.

10. Use of the Council's name:

The use of the name of the Council for any purpose, including fund raising, income generation or the production or sale of publications, irrespective of whether initiated and/or executed by members of the Council, is only permitted if authorised in writing by the Principal Officers.

11. Amendment of Articles of Association and Bye-laws:

11.1. These Articles of Association may be amended by the General Assembly.

11.2. Proposals for amendment of the Articles of Association shall be recommended to the General Assembly by the Executive Committee.

11.3. Proposals for amendment of the Articles of Association shall be published in the Council's journal and on the Council's website not later than three months prior to the General Assembly at which they are to be discussed.

11.4. Amendment of the Articles of Association shall require a two-thirds majority of the votes either of the members present and voting at a General Assembly or voting in a postal ballot, provided in each case that not less than 50% of those entitled must have voted in order for the proposal to be carried. In the event that less than 50% of those entitled shall have voted, a second ballot on the same proposal may be organised not earlier than two weeks and not later than six months after the first ballot. In this event, not less than 25% of those entitled to vote either at a General Assembly or in a postal ballot must have voted in order for the proposal to be carried.

11.5. The Executive Committee may change or add to the Council's Bye-laws by a simple majority on a recommendation of the Principal Officers made not later than three months before a meeting of the Executive Committee or a postal ballot on the same. The quorum for votes on such recommendations shall be two-thirds. If there is no quorum, a second ballot may be organised not earlier than two weeks and not later than six months after the first ballot. For the second ballot on the same proposal, the quorum shall be 50%.

11.6. The text of any changes to the Articles of Association or any additions or changes to the Bye-laws, together with the result of any vote, shall be published in the next issue of the Council's journal following their agreement and on the Council's website.

12. Dissolution of the Council

On the winding up and dissolution of the company the provisions of the Memorandum of Association shall have effect as if repeated in these Articles.

13. Miscellaneous:

In cases for which there is no clear provision either in these Articles of Association or in law, the Executive Committee shall decide issues according to the spirit of the Memorandum and Articles of Association.

Name :

Address :

Description :

Name :

Address :

Description :

December 2010



International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment

COMPANY No. 4521195
The COMPANIES ACTS 1985 and 1989

COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE AND NOT HAVING A SHARE CAPITAL

MEMORANDUM OF ASSOCIATION OF INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR EDUCATION OF PEOPLE WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

1. The name of the company (hereinafter called "the Council") is the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment.
2. The registered office of the Council will be situated in England and Wales.
3. The objects for which the Council is established are:-
 - 3.1. To be a global association of individuals and organisations that promotes equal access to appropriate education for all visually impaired children and youth so that they may achieve their full potential.
 - 3.2. To establish and maintain regions and support their activities;
 - 3.3. To convene a General Assembly at the end of each term;
 - 3.4. To promote cooperation with local, national, regional and global governmental and non-governmental organisations active in or related to the education of people with visual impairment;
 - 3.5. To influence governmental and United Nations agencies with respect to the education of people with visual impairment;
 - 3.6. To promote a positive image of people with visual impairment;
 - 3.7. To promote involvement of persons with visual impairment and their families in educational policy and planning.
4. In order to facilitate the exchange of expertise and professional knowledge and skills, the Council shall have power to:
 - 4.1. Promote local, regional and global networks;
 - 4.2. Promote training courses, conferences and meetings at a local and regional level;
 - 4.3. Promote local, national, regional and global communication;

- 4.4. Publish a global journal and regional newsletters through the internet and otherwise;
 - 4.5. Promote local and regional special interest groups and their inter-regional linkages;
 - 4.6. Do all such lawful things as may assist in carrying into effect the objects of the Council.
5. Benefits to Members and Directors
- 5.1. In this clause "director" means a member of the executive committee as provided for in the Articles of Association.
 - 5.2. The property and funds of the Council must be used only for promoting the objects and do not belong to members and there shall be no distribution of any profit whether by declaration of dividend or otherwise.
 - 5.3. Notwithstanding the previous sub-clause members including directors may be paid interest at a reasonable rate on money lent to the Council and may be reimbursed in respect of reasonable out-of-pocket expenses (including hotel and travel costs) actually incurred in running the Council.
 - 5.4. Subject as aforesaid a director must not receive any payment of money or other material benefit (whether directly or indirectly) from the Council:

Provided a director may receive a benefit where the Council makes a payment to a company in which he or she has a less than five percent shareholding.
6. The liability of the members is limited.
7. Every member of the Council undertakes to contribute to the assets of the Council, in the event of the same being wound up while he/she is a member or within one year after he/she ceases to be a member, for payment of the debts and liabilities of the Council contracted before he/she ceases to be a member and of the costs charges and expenses of winding up and for the adjustment of the rights of the contributories amongst themselves such amount as may be required not exceeding £1.
8. If upon the winding up or dissolution of the Council there remains, after the satisfaction of all its debts and liabilities, any property whatsoever the same shall not be paid to or distributed among the members of the Council but shall be given or transferred to some other body having objects similar to the objects of the Council and which shall prohibit the distribution of its income or property among its members to an extent at least as great as is imposed on the Council, under or by virtue of clause 5 hereof, such body to be determined by the members of the Council at or before the time of dissolution, and in so far as effect cannot be given to the foregoing provision, then to some other charitable body.

We the persons whose names and addresses are subscribed are desirous of being formed into a company in pursuance of this Memorandum of Association.

Last Revised: December 2010

Proposed amendments to the 2010 Articles of Association (AOA) and Memorandum of Association of ICEVI

March 2021

The 2010 Articles of Association (AOA) and Memorandum of Association (MOA) of ICEVI were endorsed in 2010. The Executive Committee proposes the following amendments to the AOA and MOA for endorsement by the ICEVI General Assembly, to be held virtually in June 2021. These amendments have come about as a result of the work of the ICEVI Governance Committee in developing a Governance Framework that was approved by the ICEVI Executive Committee in October 2019. The Governance Framework sets out the governance and administration processes of ICEVI at global and regional levels of the Council, and serves to ensure that all activities carried out under the ICEVI name and logo are compliant with the Vision, Mission, and Values of ICEVI, and also the ICEVI Code of Conduct and terms of reference.

Note for readers:

Please note that the proposed amendments are indicated in **bold** with double asterisks (**) at the beginning and end of each proposed change. Additional comments are shown in purple colour and commence with the word "Note".

Articles of Association

PROPOSED: That the nomenclature used in all articles be amended as follows:

- The global body of the ICEVI be called ****ICEVI Global**** and the regions be called ****ICEVI Regions****
- The nomenclature ****Secretary General**** be changed to ****Chief Executive Officer****
- The nomenclature ****Regional Chairperson**** be changed to ****Regional President****
- The nomenclature ****Regional Committee**** be changed to ****Regional Board****
- The nomenclature ****Executive Committee**** be changed to ****Executive Board****

Note: The above proposed changes to the nomenclature will give greater distinction between the global and regional structures of the Council.

1. Membership

Note: As per the 2010 Articles of Association, membership is open to any individual or organisation subscribing to the objects of the Council as laid down in the Memorandum of Association.

PROPOSED: That clauses 1.1 and 1.3 of Article 1 be amended as follows:

- 1.1. Membership of the Council is open to any individual or ****non profit organisation**** subscribing to the objects of the Council as laid down in the Memorandum of Association.
- 1.3. ****The Council has different classes of membership. Voting and non-voting rights are defined by the Executive Board in the Bye-Laws.****

Note: The nomenclature of Clause 1.2 has been changed.

2. Regional Structure

Note: Each ICEVI region is either registered as an NGO with a legal entity, or affiliated with an existing legal entity, within the region. The following proposed changes aim to ensure that regional activities carried out under the ICEVI name and logo are compliant with the Vision, Mission, and Values of ICEVI, and also the ICEVI Code of Conduct and terms of reference.

PROPOSED: That the following clauses of Article 2 of the 2010 AOA be revised as follows:

- 2.2. The Regional Members shall elect from the region a ****Regional President to act on behalf of the region on the Executive Board of the Council and one or more Regional Deputy Presidents to support him/her in implementing the activities of the region.****
- 2.3. The Regional ****Presidents**** shall be responsible for establishing a Regional Board of not less than 5 members. Representation on the Regional Board shall reflect the diversity of the region.

Note: The final sentence in clause 2.3 in the 2010 AOA has been removed, namely: "The immediate past Chairperson and any Principal Officer belonging to the region shall ex officio be a member of the Committee."

- 2.4. The Regional Board shall be responsible for ****ensuring that the region meets the terms of reference to operate under the ICEVI name and logo, as defined in the Bye-laws.****
- 2.5. ****The titles of the Regional Presidents and any Deputy Presidents are designated by each region according to the Constitution, customs and traditions of the region.****

Note: Clauses 2.5 to 2.9 of the 2010 AOA have been removed, as these articles are the responsibility of registered ICEVI regions, and also the regions that are affiliated with an existing legal entity with the region.

- 2.6. The Regional ****Boards**** shall appoint delegates with voting rights to the General Assembly using a process which respects diversities within the region. The number of delegates per region shall be laid down in the Bye-laws.
- 2.7. ****The Regional Boards may seek approval from the Executive Board to establish national bodies of ICEVI in specific countries, providing the Regional Board has determined that such national structures would be sustainable and will strengthen the mission, vision, values and strategy of ICEVI.****

Note: All other clause changes are to nomenclature only.

3. General Assembly

- 3.2. Those entitled to vote at the General Assembly shall consist of the Executive ****Board****, not more than two Deputy ****Presidents**** from each region and the other delegates with voting rights appointed by the Regional ****Boards**** in accordance with ****the Bye-laws****.

Note: All other clause changes are to nomenclature only.

4. Executive Committee

PROPOSED: That the following clauses and sections of Article 4 be revised as follows:

- 4.1.(e) one representative of each of the following ****Umbrella Organisations****:
- International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness
 - Deafblind International
 - World Blind Union.
- 4.3. The Executive ****Board**** shall ensure that ****the regions meet the Code of conduct and terms of reference to operate under the ICEVI name and logo, as defined in the Bye-laws.****
- 4.10. The Executive ****Board**** shall have power to appoint paid staff ****on a contractual basis**** in order to further the work of the Council.

Note: Changes to other clauses and sections of Article 4 relate to nomenclature only.

5. Principal officers

- 5.5. The ****Chief Executive Officer**** will normally be in attendance at meetings of the Principal Officers and Executive Board unless asked to withdraw while matters relating to his/her position as ****Chief Executive Officer**** are discussed.

Note: Changes to other clauses of Article 5 relate to nomenclature only.

6. International Consultative Committee

Note: The current (2010) Articles of Association refers to an advisory body called the International Consultative Committee (ICC), which was expected to meet once a year with the Executive Committee. This committee was relevant when ICEVI and WBU jointly implemented the global campaign on education for all children with visual impairment, and organisations other than those present at the Executive Committee participated in the campaign. In the present context, there is no longer a need for the ICC.

PROPOSED: That Article 6 be deleted in its entirety.

6. Terms of Office (Note: Article 7 in 2010 AOA)

Note: Clause 7.4 of the current (2010) Articles of Association states: Regional Chairpersons and International Members of the Executive Committee should normally serve in the same position for no more than two full terms.

PROPOSED: That clauses 7.4 and 7.5 be combined and amended as follows:

6.4. ****The terms of office of the Regional Presidents are determined by the Regional Constitution, whereas the elected Principal Officers of the Council should normally serve for no more than two full terms.****

7. Alternative Methods of Decision Making (Note: Article 8 in 2010 AOA)

Note: Clause changes are to nomenclature only.

8. Finance (Note: Previously Article 9 in 2010 AOA)

Note: Clause changes relate to nomenclature only.

9. Use of Council's name (Note: Article 10 in 2010 AOA)

Note: The use of the Council's name as per the current 2010 Articles of Association pertains to fundraising, sale of publications and income generation through products.

PROPOSED: That the following clause be added to Article 9

9.2. ****The ICEVI Executive Board reserves the right to withdraw agreement to be identified as an ICEVI region, should the Executive Board deem there has been a failure by the Regional Board to meet the Code of Conduct and terms of reference for use of the name and logo of ICEVI.****

10. Amendment of Articles of Association and Bye-laws (Note: Article 11 in 2010 AOA)

Note: Clause changes relate to nomenclature only.

11. Dissolution of the Council (Note: Article 12 in 2010 AOA)

Note: No change.

12. Miscellaneous (Note: Article 13 in 2010 AOA)

Note: No change.

Memorandum of Association

The following amendments are proposed to the 2010 Memorandum of Association of ICEVI in order to eliminate any potential conflict of interest of Council Members.

Object 3:

PROPOSED: To add an additional clause, in recognition of the importance of collaborative partnerships within the Council.

3.8. **To support and promote member and partner networks at global and regional levels of the Council.**

Object 5, clause 5.3:

The wording of Object 5, clause 5.3, in the 2010 MOA is as follows:

Notwithstanding the previous sub-clause members including directors may be paid interest at a reasonable rate on money lent to the Council and may be reimbursed in respect of reasonable out-of-pocket expenses (including hotel and travel costs) actually incurred in running the Council.

PROPOSED: To delete the wording “be paid interest at a reasonable rate on money lent to the Council and may” from clause 5.3, so that the clause reads as follows:

5.3. **Notwithstanding the previous sub-clause members including directors may be reimbursed in respect of reasonable out-of-pocket expenses (including hotel and travel costs) actually incurred in running the Council.**

Object 5, clause 5.4:

The wording of a section of Object 5, clause 5.4, in the 2010 MOA is as follows:

Provided a director may receive a benefit where the Council makes a payment to a company in which he or she has a less than five percent shareholding.

PROPOSED: To delete Object 5 of clause 5.4 in its entirety.

International Partner Members



CBM
www.cbm.org



Light for the World
www.light-for-the-world.org



ONCE
www.once.es



Overbrook School for the Blind
www.obs.org



Perkins School for the Blind
www.perkins.org



Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children
www.ridbc.org.au

R N I B

See differently

Royal National Institute of Blind People
www.rnib.org.uk



Sightsavers

Sightsavers
www.sightsavers.org



The Norwegian Association of the
Blind and Partially Sighted

**The Norwegian Association of the
Blind and Partially Sighted**
www.blindeforbundet.no



Royal Dutch Visio
www.visio.org

Organisational Members

American Printing House for the Blind
www.aph.org

LES DOIGTS QUI REVENT (Typhlo & Tactus)
www.tactus.org

Canadien National Institute for the Blind
www.cnib.ca

Lions Clubs International Foundation
www.lcif.org

Federazione Nazionale Delle Istituzioni Pro Ciechi
www.prociechi.it

**Round Table on Information Access for
People with Print Disabilities**
www.printdisability.org

Hadley School for the Blind
www.hadley.edu



A Message from the President of the World Blind Union

WBU/ICEVI General Assemblies

As in recent years, the World Blind Union (WBU) and the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI) will hold a Joint General Assembly. The joint General Assembly will be held virtually from 28-30 June 2021 and will be hosted by the Organización Nacional de Ciegos Españoles (ONCE), a world leader in expanding opportunities for blind people and others with disabilities. ONCE is recognized for its work to defend and advance human rights and for promoting and protecting peace, freedom, solidarity, world heritage and, in general, the progress of humanity. With ONCE's long record of effective advocacy, the joint General Assembly promises to be one of the most powerful human and civil rights events to be held anywhere in 2021.

Our joint WBU/ICEVI General Assembly will include a celebration of World Braille Day. World Braille Day is now recognized each January 4, Louis Braille's birthday since its adoption by the UN General Assembly in December 2018. World Braille Day affirms the right of blind people to have access to literacy, and by so doing, access to education, employment, and community life.

The World Blind Union will hold business and exciting thematic sessions, including one on "technology and innovation" in which representatives from major tech companies, including Amazon and Microsoft, will lead discussions on accessible services and new technologies for blind and partially sighted people.

Another exciting session will discuss mainstreaming disability issues into the work of the United Nations. UN leaders will join the discussion on how to engage our member organizations with the UN. This is in line with our advocacy effort to influence the global agenda on disability and to promote the meaningful participation and inclusion of blind and partially sighted people. We will also discuss Inclusive and Sustainable Employment for blind and partially sighted people.

Both WBU and ICEVI will conduct a series of interactive online sessions in which participants will have the opportunity to discuss and exchange ideas on how best to promote the inclusion of blind and partially sighted persons in all aspects of life.

The joint General Assembly will be held under the name, "The World Blindness Summit" and promises to be one of the largest online gatherings of blind and partially sighted people, educators, and service providers in 2021.

Our host, ONCE, is working hard to ensure that the joint WBU and ICEVI 2021 General Assembly is the best we have ever had. I encourage everyone to make plans to participate in the WBU/ICEVI online World Blindness Summit. Together, we can change the world.

For more information and to register, please go to the World Blindness Summit website.

Dr. Fredric K. Schroeder
President, WBU