

# The Educator



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

## PRINCIPAL OFFICERS

### PRESIDENT

#### **Frances Gentle**

Lecturer, NextSense Institute

361-365 North Rocks Road, North Rocks NSW 2151, AUSTRALIA

e-mail: [Frances.Gentle@nextsense.org.au](mailto:Frances.Gentle@nextsense.org.au)

### FIRST VICE PRESIDENT

#### **Bhushan Punani**

Executive Secretary, Blind People's Association (India)

132 Ft. Ring Road, Vastrapur, Ahmedabad 380 015, INDIA

e-mail: [bhushanpunani@gmail.com](mailto:bhushanpunani@gmail.com)

### SECOND VICE-PRESIDENT

#### **Sabine Fijn van Draat**

Secretary, Executive Board

NOVUM Foundation, Amersfoortsestraatweg 180, 1272 RR Huizen

THE NETHERLANDS

e-mail: [sabinefijnvandraat@visio.org](mailto:sabinefijnvandraat@visio.org)

### TREASURER

#### **Praveena Sukhraj-Ely**

Department of Justice and Constitutional Development,

Momentum Centre, 329 Pretorius Street, Pretoria, SOUTH AFRICA

e-mail: [treasurer.icevi@gmail.com](mailto:treasurer.icevi@gmail.com)

### IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

#### **Lord Low of Dalston**

Royal National Institute of Blind People

105 Judd Street, London WC1H 9NE, UNITED KINGDOM

e-mail: [colin.low@rnib.org.uk](mailto:colin.low@rnib.org.uk)

### CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

#### **Mani, M.N.G.**

No.3, Professors' Colony, Sri Ramakrishna Vidyalaya Post,

Coimbatore 641 020, Tamil Nadu, INDIA

e-mail: [ceo201922@gmail.com](mailto:ceo201922@gmail.com)

## REGIONAL PRESIDENTS

### AFRICA

#### **Gertrude Oforiwa Fefoame**

Sightsavers' Global Advocacy Advisor  
Densu Point, P.O. Box KIA 18190, North Dzorwulu, Accra, GHANA  
e-mail: [gofefoame@sightsavers.org](mailto:gofefoame@sightsavers.org)

### EAST ASIA

#### **Aria Indrawati**

President, Pertuni (The Indonesian Blind Association)  
P.O.Box 386, Jl Pertanian Raya, No. 51 Jakarta, INDONESIA  
e-mail: [aria.indrawati@gmail.com](mailto:aria.indrawati@gmail.com)

### EUROPE

#### **John Ravenscroft**

Professor of Childhood Visual Impairment, Moray House School of Education and Sport  
University of Edinburgh, Holyrood Road, EH8 8AQ, Edinburgh, UNITED KINGDOM  
e-mail: [john.ravenscroft@ed.ac.uk](mailto:john.ravenscroft@ed.ac.uk)

### LATIN AMERICA

#### **Julio César Canizález**

Autopista a Comalapa Urbanización Los Héroes N° B-5, San Salvador,  
EL SALVADOR  
e-mail: [presidencia@icevilatinoamerica.org](mailto:presidencia@icevilatinoamerica.org)

### NORTH AMERICA/CARIBBEAN

#### **Susan LaVenture**

North America and Caribbean Regional-ICEVI Office  
C/O New York Institute for Special Education, 999 Pelham Parkway, Bronx, NY USA  
e-mail: [laventuresusan506@gmail.com](mailto:laventuresusan506@gmail.com)

### PACIFIC

#### **Joanne Mosen**

Disability Inclusion Consultant, Director, Disability Inclusion PTY LTD.  
PO Box 2123, Forest Hill 3131, Victoria, AUSTRALIA  
e-mail: [joanne@disabilityinclusion.com.au](mailto:joanne@disabilityinclusion.com.au)

### WEST ASIA

#### **Birendra Raj Pokharel**

Action on Disability Rights and Development (ADRAD)  
10/80 (Kha) Kopundole, Lalitpur, NEPAL  
e-mail: [birendra.abilis@gmail.com](mailto:birendra.abilis@gmail.com)

## FOUNDING ORGANISATIONS

### **American Foundation for the Blind**

#### **Eric Bridges**

President & CEO

1101, Wilson Blvd, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor, Arlington, VA 22209, USA

e-mail: [ebridges@afb.org](mailto:ebridges@afb.org)

### **Perkins School for the Blind**

#### **Deborah Gleason**

Director, Asia and Pacific Region, Perkins International

Perkins School for the Blind, 175 North Beacon Street, Watertown, MA 02472, USA

e-mail: [deborah.gleason@perkins.org](mailto:deborah.gleason@perkins.org)

### **Royal National Institute of Blind People**

#### **Caireen Sutherland**

105 Judd Street, London WC1H 9NE

UNITED KINGDOM.

e-mail: [caireen.sutherland@rnib.org.uk](mailto:caireen.sutherland@rnib.org.uk)

## INTERNATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

### **Deafblind International**

#### **Mirko Baur**

Vice President, Dbl & CEO, Tanne, Swiss Foundation for Congenital Deafblindness

Alte Dorfstrasse 3d, CH-8135, Langnau am Albis, SWITZERLAND

e-mail: [mirko.baur@tanne.ch](mailto:mirko.baur@tanne.ch)

### **World Blind Union**

#### **Diana Stentoft**

President

68 Meadway, Sunnyhills, Auckland 2010, NEW ZEALAND

e-mail: [dis@blind.dk](mailto:dis@blind.dk)

### **International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness**

#### **Peter Holland**

Chief Executive Officer

4-108, 8 Devonshire Square, London EC2M 4PL, UNITED KINGDOM

e-mail: [pholland@iapb.org](mailto:pholland@iapb.org)

## INTERNATIONAL PARTNER MEMBERS

### **Norwegian Association of the Blind and Partially Sighted (NABPS)**

#### **Terje Iversen**

Director for International, Development Cooperation  
P.O. Box 5900, Majorstua 0308 Oslo, NORWAY  
e-mail: [terje.iversen@blindeforbundet.no](mailto:terje.iversen@blindeforbundet.no)

### **Organización Nacional de Ciegos Españoles**

#### **Ana Peláez**

Director, C/ Almansa, 66, 28039 Madrid, SPAIN  
e-mail: [apn@once.es](mailto:apn@once.es)

### **Overbrook School for the Blind**

#### **Todd Reeves**

CEO and Executive Director  
6333 Malvern Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19151-2597, USA  
e-mail: [todd.reeves@obs.org](mailto:todd.reeves@obs.org)

### **Perkins School for the Blind**

#### **Katherine Holland**

Regional Coordinator – Asia and the Pacific  
175 North Beacon Street, Watertown, MA 02472, USA  
e-mail: [katherine.holland@perkins.org](mailto:katherine.holland@perkins.org)

### **NextSense Institute**

#### **Frances Gentle**

Lecturer  
361-365 North Rocks Road, North Rocks NSW 2151, AUSTRALIA  
e-mail: [Frances.Gentle@nextsense.org.au](mailto:Frances.Gentle@nextsense.org.au)

### **Royal National Institute of Blind People**

#### **Caireen Sutherland**

105 Judd Street, London WC1H 9NE, UNITED KINGDOM  
e-mail: [caireen.sutherland@rnib.org.uk](mailto:caireen.sutherland@rnib.org.uk)

### **Sightsavers**

#### **Andrew Griffiths**

Head of Advocacy  
35 Perrymount Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH16 3BW UNITED KINGDOM  
e-mail: [agriffiths@sightsavers.org](mailto:agriffiths@sightsavers.org)

#### **Visio**

#### **Marcel Janssen**

NOVUM Foundation  
Amersfoortsestraatweg 180, 1272 RR Huizen, THE NETHERLANDS  
E-mail: [MarcelJanssen@visio.org](mailto:MarcelJanssen@visio.org)

## International Partner Members

**Norwegian Association of the Blind and Partially Sighted (NABPS)**

[www.blindeforbundet.no](http://www.blindeforbundet.no)

**Organización Nacional de Ciegos Españoles**

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

**Overbrook School for the Blind**

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

**Perkins School for the Blind**

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

**NextSense Institute**

[www.nextsense.org.au](http://www.nextsense.org.au)

**Royal National Institute of Blind People**

[www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)

**Sightsavers**

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

**Visio**

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

## Organisational Members

**American Printing House for the Blind**

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

**Canadian National Institute for the Blind**

[www.cnib.ca](http://www.cnib.ca)

**Federazione Nazionale Delle Istituzioni Pro Ciechi**

[www.prociechi.it](http://www.prociechi.it)

**Hadley Institute for the Blind and Visually Impaired**

[www.hadley.edu](http://www.hadley.edu)

**LES DOIGTS QUI REVENT (Typhlo & Tactus)**

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

**Lions Clubs International Foundation**

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

**Round Table on Information Access for People with Print Disabilities**

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

### **Editor**

**Kay Ferrell**

Professor Emerita, Special Education  
University of Northern Colorado  
10806 Bear Cub Drive  
Broomfield, CO 80021  
USA

### **Associate Editors**

**M.N.G. Mani**  
**Nandini Rawal**

### **Assistant Editor**

**Bhushan Punani**

### **Editorial Committee**

**Frances Gentle**  
**Kay Ferrell**  
**M.N.G. Mani**

### **Designing**

**ICEVI Secretariat**  
No.3, Professors' Colony  
S.R.K. Vidyalyaya Post  
Coimbatore - 641 020  
Tamil Nadu, INDIA  
Telefax : 91-422-2693414  
e-mail : [ceo201922@gmail.com](mailto:ceo201922@gmail.com)



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## Message from the President and CEO



Dear Readers,

We are delighted to dedicate this issue to the seven regions of ICEVI. The regional Boards of ICEVI play a significant role in promoting the right to equitable quality education for children and young people with visual impairment. The Presidents and Boards of each region are active in improving cooperation on various matters pertaining to education at regional, national, and



local community levels. The focus of each ICEVI region varies according to the unique attributes and concerns of the region's member countries and the ICEVI members and partners who are active in the region. Regional priorities may include, for example, promotion of anti-discrimination laws and education policies; ratification of the WIPO Marrakesh Treaty and production of "born accessible" educational texts; promotion of teacher knowledge and skills in visual impairment; and initiatives to positively influence equitable access to education and social inclusion for children and young people with visual impairment.

In 2021, the ICEVI Executive Board recommended that the regional Boards be encouraged to extend their annual planning to include quadrennial planning, commencing with the 2021-2024 Quadrennium. This extensive exercise was conducted by the regional Presidents and Boards, in consultation with the CEO, Principal Officers, and international and regional member organisations of ICEVI. The quadrennial plans identify the aspirations of the regions and also the practical realities that set limits on what may be achieved. Recognising that the Regional Presidents and Board members are volunteers, each region took into account the availability of human expertise and physical and financial resources that could be supported by ICEVI global and generated by their regional Boards.

In this issue, we delve into the organisational structures, priorities and initiatives of each ICEVI region. We acknowledge with thanks the regional Presidents and Boards who have prepared the information presented in the issue. These key members of ICEVI volunteer their time and expertise to move forward our Mission of promoting access to inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all people with visual impairment.

If you would like to be involved with ICEVI in your part of the world, please contact the regional President in your region (contact details included in this issue).

**Frances Gentle**, President;

and

**M.N.G. Mani**, Chief Executive Officer

## Message from the Editor



Dear Readers,

This issue, long overdue, focuses on the regions that make up the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment. You will be impressed with the amount of work that is going on across the world, all in the name of ICEVI Global and on behalf of children and people with visual impairment. Read about what's happening in the region you live in, or read this issue cover-to-cover, but take satisfaction in the understanding that with all that's going on in the world—where active wars are raging in at least two of our regions and maybe more—the work continues, sometimes under extraordinarily difficult circumstances.

The next issue of *The Educator* will address the year-long strategic planning effort of ICEVI's Executive Board. I participated in the last strategic planning process in 2017 and am anxious to read about what lies ahead.

Our next World Conference and General Assembly occurs in November 14-17, 2024, in Ahmedabad, India. I will look for you there!

**Kay Alicyn Ferrell**

[kay.ferrell@unco.edu](mailto:kay.ferrell@unco.edu)

Broomfield, Colorado, USA

# Regional Development – Vital for the Growth of ICEVI

The constitution of ICEVI clearly indicates that all members of ICEVI are also members of the regions. The seven regions are represented on the global Executive Board by their regional Presidents. This ensures that regional priorities and concerns are supported at the highest level of the organisation. Regional development and the nurturing of national leadership are central to the work of ICEVI, as reiterated during the strategic planning meetings of the ICEVI Executive Board, held in London and Pretoria in 2010 and 2017.

## **Key parameters of regional development:**

The ICEVI strategic reviews in 2010 and 2017 identified the following nine parameters as essential in ensuring the regions are well governed and financially managed, and effectively collaborating with members and partners in promoting the ICEVI mission and regional priorities.

- 1) Registration of the region as a legal entity wherever feasible
- 2) Presence of a strong regional Board that meets regularly
- 3) Mechanism to collect membership fees
- 4) Hosting of regional conferences, preferably once each quadrennium
- 5) Effective secretarial assistance for organising regional and national-level activities
- 6) Ability to collaborate with ICEVI members and partners, and the Boards of other ICEVI regions
- 7) Mechanism in place for fund raising
- 8) List of voting delegates for the Quadrennium
- 9) Presence of sub-committees, as required, to implement the annual plans of the region

The presence of the nine parameters in the region is desirable, but some key aspects such as registration as a legal entity and the membership structure are preferred.

Presented below are overviews of the seven regions of ICEVI. The countries contained within each geographical region are listed, however, the countries where ICEVI is active is determined in consultation with ICEVI organizational members and collaborating partners. Each of the the regional updates concludes with information on the accomplishments during the fiscal year beginning 1st January 2023. Noting that this is the July 2023 issue of The Educator, the activities are still progressing. More information will be available in future issues.

# What's Happening Out There?

## Updates from the 7 Regions of ICEVI

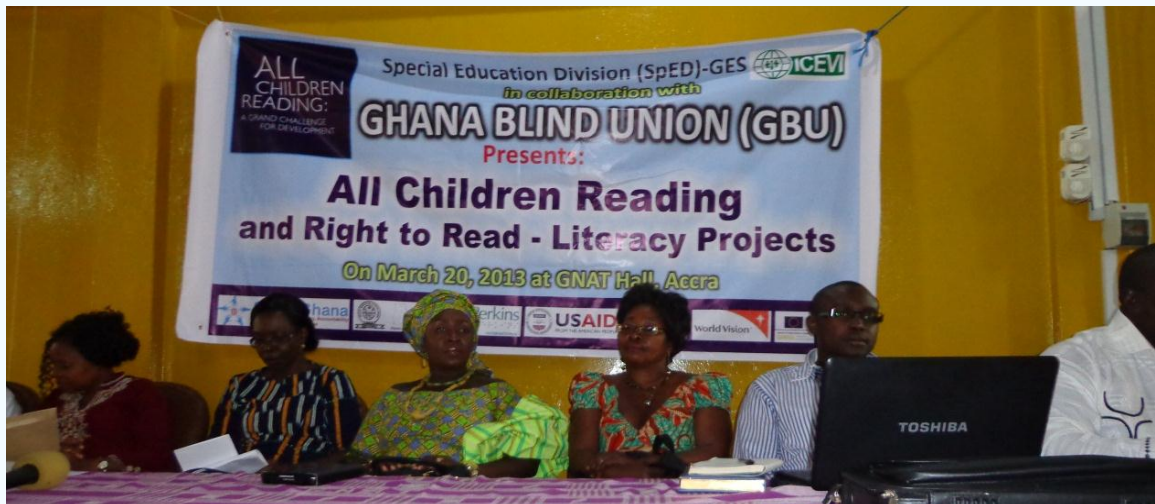
### Africa Region

The African Region includes the countries of

Algeria	Gabon	Nigeria
Angola	Gambia	Rwanda
Benin	Ghana	Sao Tome and Principe
Botswana	Guinea	Senegal
Burkina Faso	Guinea-Bissau	Seychelles
Burundi	Kenya	Sierra Leone
Cameroon	Lesotho	Somalia
Cape Verde	Liberia	South Africa
Central African Republic	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Sudan
Chad	Madagascar	Swaziland
Comoros	Malawi	Togo
Congo	Mali	Tunisia
Cote d'Ivoire	Mauritania	Uganda
Djibouti	Mauritius	United Republic of Tanzania
Egypt	Morocco	Zambia
Equatorial Guinea	Mozambique	Zimbabwe
Eritrea	Namibia	
Ethiopia	Niger	

## Africa's Key Activities Organised from 2013 to 2020

- ICEVI Africa implemented activities related to the global campaign on Education For All Children with Visual Impairment (EFA-VI) in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Swaziland, Rwanda, and Uganda.
- ICEVI Africa worked with national representatives of the African Network Campaign on Education for All (ANCEFA) and its national coalitions to promote the EFA-VI Global Campaign in the region.



- ICEVI Africa region was also a part of the Marrakesh treaty signing and ratification advocacy campaign committee steered by the Africa Union of the Blind (AFUB)
- EFA-VI campaign was relaunched at the IDP Africa Forum in Kampala, Uganda in October 2015.
- ICEVI has formed a strategic partnership with the DAISY Consortium to provide practical ICT solutions for people with print disabilities.
- The ICEVI Africa region organised a number of technical and interactive





sessions on EFA-VI Global Campaign, Vision Alliance, Early Childhood Care and Education, Education of Multiply Disabled Visually Impaired Children, Teaching of Mathematics, etc., for the participants of the IDP Africa Forum held in Kampala in October 2015.

- The Centre for Mathematics, Science and Technology Education in Africa (CEMASTE) and ICEVI Africa region signed a memorandum of understanding to promote inclusion of needs of learners with visual impairment in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects.
- Transition programmes have made technology more prominent.
- Textbook production and distribution has grown through the endorsement of the Marrakech Treaty in the region.
- The Country Champions Program was created to replicate the Kenya experience.
- The Africa region has been registered as a legal entity.
- The Africa region is focusing on the visionary learning that was initiated in the last Quadrennium in Kenya.
- The 2014 Global Action Week on Inclusive Education in Ethiopia was observed with the theme focusing on Equal Right, Equal Opportunity: Education and Disability.
- The Global Action Week theme was observed and ran its campaign on Equal Rights, Equal Opportunities: Inclusive Education for Children with Disability in Kenya on 16 June 2014.
- A basic course on Adaptive Mathematics for Learners with Visual Impairment was held 11th - 15th August 2014 at the Centre for Mathematics, Science and Technology Education in Africa (CEMASTE) Nairobi, Kenya.
- Collaborative activities and meetings with world bodies such as ABC, ADF, AFUB, African Union, DAISY Consortium, WIPO, WBU etc., were organised.



- ICEVI Africa has been facilitating the establishment of a Bookshare library for Francophone Africa where five countries are participating.
- In partnership with the DAISY Consortium, ICEVI Africa made presentations in two sensitization webinars for African publishers. The two webinars targeted publishers in Anglophone and Francophone African countries.



## Africa's Quadrennial Plans- 2021-2025

### 1. BACKGROUND

ICEVI Africa implemented its 2017-2020 Strategic Plan with considerable success, despite a number of challenges faced during the period. Some important lessons were also learned that informed the development of the current Strategic Framework. This Framework thus carries forward several strategic priorities that remain relevant and deliverable in the coming quadrennial. A number of priorities in the last strategic period have been redefined while several new ones have been introduced.

### 2. OVERALL GOAL

The Overall Goal of ICEVI Africa is to promote equal access to appropriate education and support services for people with visual impairment so that they may achieve their full potential.

### 3. STRATEGIC GOAL

Our Strategic Goal for the next quadrennial shall be to scale our work in promoting access to quality education for people with visual impairment including those with blindness, partial sight, deafblindness, and additional disabilities.

### 4. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

1. To promote the integration of ICT in the education of people with visual impairment in Africa through Visionary Learning.
2. To influence legislation, policies and programs at the national, regional and international levels for the promotion of education and inclusion for people with visual impairment.



3. To facilitate the creation and sharing of information on the education and inclusion of people with visual impairment in Africa.
4. To strengthen the capacity of ICEVI Africa to provide leadership in the education of people with visual impairment in Africa.

## **5. STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREAS**

- a. Visionary Learning
- b. Influencing
- c. Information
- d. Organizational Development

## **6. STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS**

### **a. *Visionary Learning***

Goal: To promote the integration and utilization of ICT in the education of people with visual impairment in Africa.

ICT is increasingly becoming an important resource in education, either as a medium of instruction or as a source of teaching and learning materials. To promote the integration and use of ICT in the education of people with visual impairment, ICEV and its partners adopted the Visionary Learning concept—a comprehensive approach built upon three pillars: Kit, Content, and Confidence.

During the last quadrennial, ICEVI and its Visionary Learning partners popularized the concept within the education of people with visual impairment with significant focus on Africa. In the coming quadrennial, ICEVI Africa proposes to promote Visionary Learning in Africa through the following interventions:

- i. Facilitate the development and introduction of Visionary Learning initiatives in 2 African countries. During the last quadrennial, ICEVI Africa and its partners initiated Visionary Learning in Kenya. In the coming quadrennial, ICEVI Africa proposes to initiate Visionary Learning in 2 new countries to be identified in consultation with the partners and stakeholders within the proposed countries.
- ii. Provide technical assistance to 4 African countries on specific aspects of Visionary Learning. The introduction of Visionary Learning comes with continuous technical assistance and mentorship from ICEVI and its Visionary Learning partners. Over the next four years, this assistance is expected to continue in Kenya. In addition, ICEVI Africa will provide assistance to the two

new countries where Visionary Learning will be introduced as well as to one additional country in preparation for the introduction of Visionary Learning in the next quadrennial.

- iii. Conduct 8 trainings on the use of ICT in the education and inclusion of people with visual impairment. In addition to the Visionary Learning initiatives and technical assistance proposed above, ICEVI Africa will, in collaboration with other stakeholders, provide trainings on the integration and use of ICT in the education of people with visual impairment. The trainings, which will be online as well as face-to-face, shall target users, teachers, policy-makers and other persons and agencies involved in the education of people with visual impairment.

**b. *Influencing***

Goal: To influence legislation, policies and programs at the national, regional and international levels for the promotion of education and inclusion of people with visual impairment.

Quality and inclusive education and the full inclusion of people with visual impairment in the society cannot be guaranteed unless there are legislative and policy frameworks for their enforcement. The utility of these legislative and policy frameworks, at whatever level, depends on the strength of the necessary provisions and the efficacy of their enforcement. This requires substantial levels of influencing within the various stages of the legislative or policy cycles.

ICEVI Africa recognizes the importance and central role of influencing legislation, policies and programs at the national, regional and international levels in order to guarantee and promote the education and inclusion of people with visual impairment in the continent. In this regard, ICEVI Africa proposes to undertake the following interventions:

- i. Contribute towards influencing 4 African governments to ratify and implement international legislation that promote the education and inclusion of people with visual impairment. ICEVI Africa recognizes the importance of ratification and implementation of international legal frameworks by African governments. To this end, and in collaboration with other actors, ICEVI Africa shall contribute towards the successful ratification and implementation of international legislations by 4 governments. The Marrakesh Treaty and the African Disability Protocol shall be prioritized.

- ii. Participate in 4 regional organisations and networks to Influence their policies and programs in favor of the education and inclusion of people with visual impairment in Africa. ICEVI Africa shall seek membership to and participate in four regional organisations and networks in order to influence their policies and programs with a view to making them more inclusive of people with visual impairment. Particular focus will be on membership organisations and networks of organisations working in education and development in the continent.
- iii. Build capacity of youth champions from 4 countries on influencing legislation, policies and programs at country level. During the next four years, ICEVI Africa shall contribute to the influencing of national legislation and policies in favor of people with visual impairment within 4 countries by building the capacity of in-country youth champions through training and mentorship. This shall be in line with similar initiatives implemented by ICEVI Africa and other partners in several countries in Africa. Areas of focus shall include gender equity, youth participation, inclusive education, ICT educational resourcing.

**c. *Information***

Goal: To facilitate the creation and sharing of information on the education and inclusion of people with visual impairment in Africa.

For many years, ICEVI has been engaged in the creation of information and other resources on the education of people with visual impairment. Most of these resources are available on the ICEVI website. ICEVI has also convened international and regional conferences and workshops to facilitate exchange of information. Similarly, many other organisations in Africa and around the world have created and put into the public domain information on the education and inclusion of people with visual impairment. Unfortunately, a lot of this information has not been utilized by people in Africa.

During the next four years, ICEVI Africa shall prioritize the creation, sharing and utilization of information on the education and inclusion of people with visual impairment, laying greater emphasis on online and other technology-based media. The following interventions shall be prioritized:

- i. Create and maintain 3 platforms on the ICEVI Africa website for sharing of information on the education and inclusion of people with visual impairment. ICEVI Africa proposes to increase the use of its online platforms, especially its website, for dissemination and exchange of information on the education

and inclusion of people with visual impairment in Africa. This shall be done through the creation of a resources page with links to important resources (including resources developed by ICEVI Global), facilitating thematic discussion forums and collecting and regularly updating information blogs on the education and inclusion of people with visual impairment in Africa and around the world.

- ii. Make 12 presentations at national, regional and international conferences and other events on the education and inclusion of people with visual impairment. ICEVI Africa proposes to make presentations in 12 conferences and similar events of relevance to the education and inclusion of people with visual impairment. These events shall either be online or face-to-face. All papers presented at these events shall be in the name of ICEVI Africa.
- iii. Convene a regional conference on the education and inclusion of people with visual impairment in Africa. Over the years, the role of ICEVI Africa in convening the Africa Forum and other regional conferences has increased. During the next quadrennial, ICEVI Africa proposes to play a more central role in convening a regional conference on the education and inclusion of people with visual impairment in Africa.

**d. *Organizational Development***

Goal: To strengthen the capacity of ICEVI Africa to provide leadership in the education of people with visual impairment in Africa.

ICEVI Africa was registered in Kenya as a legal entity in 2019. This registration comes with a wealth of opportunities as well as a number of statutory obligations. As a legal entity, ICEVI Africa can enter into contracts and legal arrangements with other organisations and can undertake programs with greater confidence.

In the coming quadrennial, ICEVI Africa intends to make full use of the legal entity to enhance its ability to promote the rights to education and inclusion for people with visual impairment in Africa. To achieve this, the following key interventions shall be prioritized:

- i. Mobilize membership to ICEVI Africa to expand its representation into 8 additional countries. As a membership organisation, ICEVI Africa will prioritize the mobilization of membership and country representation from the current 12 to 20 countries. Membership shall also be diversified and

categorized to meet the interests of every member. The ICEVI Africa website shall be used as a platform for membership registration and to provide a forum for interaction.

- ii. Carry out all governance and administrative activities in compliance with statutory obligations. The registration of ICEVI Africa as a legal entity comes with several governance and statutory obligations. These are: separating governance and administrative roles; holding meetings of the Board three times a year; holding annual general meetings; conducting annual external financial audits; and, filing annual returns to the Kenya Government. ICEVI Africa intends to fully comply with these obligations.
- iii. Undertake resource mobilization to increase the total quadrennial revenue of ICEVI Africa by sixty percent.

## Africa's 2023 Activity Report

*In 2023, ICEVI Africa continued to implement its four-year Strategic Plan 2022-2025. The Plan covers four main priorities—namely, Visionary Learning, Influencing, Information, and Organizational Development. This report highlights activities and accomplishments for the year 2023.*

### **Visionary Learning:**

Visionary Learning Using Technology is an approach adopted by ICEVI to enhance the utilization of digital technologies in the education of learners with visual impairment. The approach seeks to promote the provision of digital devices, accessible digital content as well as training to enable learners with visual impairment to use the devices and content in daily learning activities. ICEVI Africa has been promoting this approach around the continent, with very encouraging outcomes.

In Kenya, ICEVI Africa has been supporting several organizations to implement aspects of Visionary Learning. In particular, ICEVI Africa has been providing leadership in a national



Visionary Learning project implemented by a number of government agencies, including the Ministry of Education. The project, whose implementation started in July 2023, aims at providing digital devices, accessible content, and training for 5000 learners with print disabilities over the next five years.

In Burkina Faso, ICEVI Africa is collaborating with Light for the World to implement a Visionary Learning project for learners with visual impairment at high school. So far, most of the activities have been carried out and by the end of the year, all participating learners will be able to engage in learning using the Visionary Learning model, supported by teachers trained in Visionary Learning competencies.

ICEVI Africa has also been sensitizing stakeholders in a number of countries on Visionary Learning with a view to preparing them as the next countries for implementation of the approach. During the year, visits were made to Ethiopia and Uganda to discuss with stakeholders strategies for initiating Visionary Learning projects. Remote discussions were also held with Ghana, and Nigeria, countries that have great potential for successful Visionary Learning initiatives.

### **Influencing:**

The goal of this strategic pillar is to influence governmental and non-governmental decision-makers to adopt legislation, policies, and practices that improve the quality of education and inclusion for people with visual impairment. Main priorities, particularly for this year, were the ratification, implementation and enforcement of the Marrakesh Treaty and the African Disability Protocol.

Through her role as the Chairperson of the UNCRPD Committee, the President of ICEVI Africa oversaw the inclusion of recommendations aimed at enhancing quality and inclusive education for persons with visual impairment within the Concluding Observations of three African countries that were reviewed by the Committee in 2023, namely, Malawi, Mali, and Togo. The recommendations include the ratification and implementation of the Marrakesh Treaty and the development of inclusive education policies. These recommendations are expected to expedite the ratification and implementation of the Treaty and improvement in the provision of quality and inclusive education for people with visual impairment in these countries.

ICEVI Africa is represented in the International Communication Rights Alliance (ICRA) where, currently, the Alliance is working towards encouraging its members to contribute to their countries' civil society reports to the UNCRPD Committee and raising awareness on current activities addressing communication rights. Increased participation in civil society reporting to the CRPD Committee will help highlight issues that need to be addressed by State Parties for the benefit of people with disabilities.



During the year, ICEVI Africa continued working with stakeholders in several priority countries towards the implementation of the Marrakesh Treaty in their national copyright laws. In Nigeria, after several years of negotiations, the revised Copyright Act was signed into law in March 2023. This paves the way for the enjoyment of the full benefits of the Marrakesh Treaty by Nigerians with print disabilities. During the year, visits were made to Ethiopia and Uganda to continue the push for the implementation of the Marrakesh Treaty. Also, numerous remote meetings were held with stakeholders in Cameroon to discuss strategies for the review of the Copyright Act. The need for a technical assistance visit has been expressed and may take place in 2024.

At the 1st ICEVI Africa Conference, detailed discussions were held with the Uganda State Minister for Disability Affairs towards the implementation of the Marrakesh Treaty in the Uganda copyright law. The result of these discussions was a commitment by the Minister to support the process to its completion.

This year too, ICEVI Africa supported the Ghana Blind Union to convene a stakeholders' forum on the African Disability Protocol (ADP). The forum sought to raise awareness on the ADP and to increase pressure for the Government of Ghana to ratify the Protocol. Twenty organizations participated, including government institutions, development agencies and organizations of persons with disabilities.

ICEVI Africa participated in the World Intellectual Property Day Celebrations in Kenya held on 26th April 2023. The celebrations were characterized by an international workshop hosted by the Strathmore University Law School in collaboration with Electronic Information for Libraries (EIFL) and the Kenya Copyright Board. ICEVI Africa delivered a Keynote Speech on the Right to Read for Persons with Disabilities and presided over the launch of the Kenya version of the EIFL Guide to the Marrakesh Treaty for libraries.



ICEVI Africa has been working with numerous stakeholders to promote the agenda for persons with deafblindness in Africa. This year, ICEVI Africa continued to provide leadership in strengthening the newly-established Deafblind Africa Network and by participating in the Global Campaign on Education for People who are Deafblind. In addition, ICEVI Africa provided opportunities for visibility to Deafblind International, the

Deafblind Africa Network, and the African Federation of the Deafblind at the ICEVI Africa Conference.

Finally, ICEVI Africa has also been participating in events within Kenya where it has influenced policies and programs to improve service delivery to people with visual impairment. Key among these include a Business Accelerator Program for People with Disabilities implemented by GIZ and Strathmore University; and an Assistive Technology Program for People with Disabilities funded by the Clinton Health Access Initiative. In these and other similar initiatives, ICEVI Africa provided technical input that has significantly improved educational interventions for people with visual impairment in Kenya.

### **Information:**

The work of the ICEVI Africa region in this area focuses on facilitating the creation and sharing of information on the education of people with visual impairment. Most of the activities for the year involved participation and presentation at conferences and other information-sharing forums.

ICEVI Africa participated in the Annual Inclusive Africa Conference 2023 that took place in Kenya from 29th to 31st May 2023 and organized by InAble, a Kenyan-registered nonprofit, where it made a presentation on Visionary Learning. In addition, the ICEVI Africa representative in Togo hosted the virtual version of the conference, making it possible for dozens of participants in the country who could not attend the conference in person to meet centrally and follow the conference proceedings virtually.

During the year, ICEVI Africa convened its first ever regional conference. The 1st ICEVI Africa Conference was held in Kenya in October and was attended by 415 participants from 30 countries. The success of the conference demonstrated the need for information-sharing on the education of people with visual impairment in Africa as well as the place and role of ICEVI Africa in providing leadership in shaping educational services in the continent.

Likewise, in the month of October, ICEVI Africa delivered a Keynote Speech at a conference organized by the School of Education and Leadership, College of Education, University of Ghana. The Speech focused on Disability in Education: Sustainability of an Inclusive Africa.

ICEVI Africa also participated in the 10th African Union of the Blind (AFUB) General Assembly held in Morocco towards the end of October, where it affirmed its solidarity and commitment to working together with AFUB. This participation of ICEVI Africa was made possible through support from Sightsavers.



ICEVI Africa has also been participating in several activities at the Global level. These include participation in the planning and preparation for the upcoming ICEVI World Conference in 2024, the development of the new ICEVI Global Strategic Plan, and in meetings and activities of other ICEVI groups.

### **Organizational Development:**

In the area of organizational development, ICEVI Africa has been working towards strengthening its organizational capacity to deliver on its mandate as a legally-registered organization. During the year, attention was given to compliance with legal obligations as a registered agency and to expanding our partnerships and collaboration.

During the year, ICEVI Africa entered into a new three-year partnership with CBM International with the aim of increasing the utilization of ICEVI teacher development resources in Africa. With the support of CBM, ICEVI Africa will create six training modules for teachers and make them available on the ICEVI Africa website. In addition, the partnership will enable ICEVI Africa to strengthen its organizational, programmatic and financial capacities through the development and implementation of pertinent policies and procedures.



ICEVI Africa also entered into collaboration with Smiley Charity Iceland who are implanting a project that seeks to create interest and improve performance in Mathematics among learners through the SmileyTutor web platform. In Kenya, the project has already enrolled 4,000 learners and

provided tablets and user accounts to learners to access the platform. The platform, which uses a reward system based on a crypto currency called Smileycoin, has significantly increased interest in Mathematics among Kenyan learners. Through this collaboration, ICEVI Africa has received five tablets and 25 user accounts for piloting with learners who are visually impaired in Kenyan schools. The success of the pilot will lead to additional digital devices being provided to learners with visual impairment and is expected to increase interest and improve performance in Mathematics among the learners.

## East Asia Region

The East Asia Region is composed of the countries of

**Brunei Darussalam**

**Cambodia**

**China**

**Chinese Taipei**

**Democratic People's  
Republic of Korea**

**East Timor**

**Hong Kong, China**

**Indonesia**

**Japan**

**Lao People's  
Democratic  
Republic**

**Macao, China**

**Malaysia**

**Mongolia**

**Myanmar**

**Philippines**

**Republic of Korea**

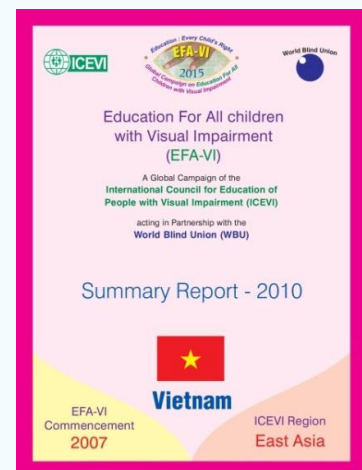
**Singapore**

**Thailand**

**Vietnam**

## East Asia's Key Activities Organised from 2013 to 2020

- The EFA-VI global campaign activities were implemented in Cambodia, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam.
- Implementation of higher education project with the support of the Nippon foundation in Indonesia, Vietnam, Philippines, Cambodia, Myanmar (until 2020), Laos and Mongolia.
- Conducted a series of workshops on teaching mathematics to popularise math education in the region.
- Prepared adapted instructional materials and teaching mathematics to students with visual impairment from primary to senior secondary levels.
- Strengthening WIPO activities in the region. Vietnam has already conducted a program in partnership with WIPO.
- Country champions program in the region involving MDVI students too.
- SEAMEO SEN collaboration.



- The Indonesia network of ICEVI organised a conference on multiple disabilities in Matram, Indonesia on 10th and 11th October 2014, which was attended by teachers, officials from the Ministry of Education, representatives from the South East ASEAN Ministers of Education Organisation (SEAMEO), and national NGOs.
- ICEVI had a meeting with the officials of PAVIC (Parents Advocates for Visually Impaired Children) in Manila, the Philippines, on 22nd April 2014, to strengthen joint activities. ICEVI supported PAVIC in organising its 4th National Parents Congress in Manila from 9 to 11 May 2014.
- Conducted ICEVI East Asia regional conference in Bali Indonesia in 2015.
- ICEVI was one of the organising partners of the first International Conference on Special Education (ICSE 2015), organised by the Office of the Basic Education Commission, Ministry of Education Thailand and SEAMEO-SEN in Bangkok, Thailand from 28 to 31 July 2015.
- Participation at the SEAMEO-SEN Board Meeting in Kuching, Malaysia on 14-16 September 2015.
- A regional workshop on the ICEVI publication, Mathematics Made Easy for Children with Visual Impairment, organised jointly by ICEVI and SEAMEO-SEN during November and December 2015.
- Working with Parent Advocates for Visually Impaired Children (PAVIC) in the Philippines and supporting regional conferences.





- Conducted ICEVI East Asia regional conference in Manila on 16-17 October 2018.
- Participated in various UN related meetings in Bangkok.
- Conducted ICEVI East Asia Regional Conference in Yogyakarta, Indonesia on 18-21 September 2023.



*Note: The ICEVI East Asia region and the ICEVI Europe regions preferred to have annual plans for implementation of ICEVI activities that were acceptable to the ICEVI Executive Board. The Europe region was the first regional body to have legal status and has been collaborating with a number of key partners in the region. Moreover, the resources for its regional activities too were generated locally with the help of the implementing countries and key services organisations present in the region. Therefore annual plans were more feasible for the Europe region.*

*In the case of the East Asia region, The Nippon Foundation supported the higher education project, one of the flagship activities of ICEVI, which is underway. Therefore, the region preferred to make effective use of the higher education project network in the region that was agreeable to ICEVI.*

## Europe Region

*The European Region consists of the following countries:*

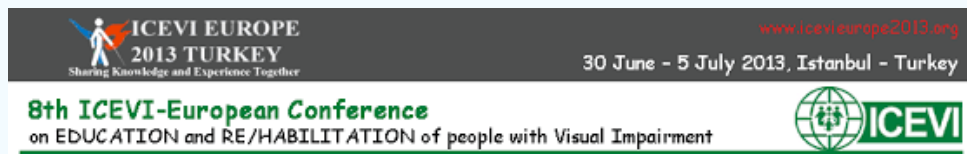
<b>Albania</b>	<b>Georgia</b>	<b>Macedonia (former Yugoslav Republic of)</b>
<b>Andorra</b>	<b>Greece</b>	<b>Republic of Moldova</b>
<b>Armenia</b>	<b>Hungary</b>	<b>Romania</b>
<b>Austria</b>	<b>Israel</b>	<b>Russian Federation</b>
<b>Azerbaijan</b>	<b>Iceland</b>	<b>San Marino</b>
<b>Belarus</b>	<b>Ireland</b>	<b>Slovakia</b>
<b>Belgium</b>	<b>Italy</b>	<b>Slovenia</b>
<b>Bosnia and Herzego- vina</b>	<b>Kazakhstan</b>	<b>Spain</b>
<b>Bulgaria</b>	<b>Latvia</b>	<b>Sweden</b>
<b>Croatia</b>	<b>Liechtenstein</b>	<b>Switzerland</b>
<b>Cyprus</b>	<b>Lithuania</b>	<b>Turkey</b>
<b>Czech Republic</b>	<b>Luxembourg</b>	<b>Ukraine</b>
<b>Denmark</b>	<b>Malta</b>	<b>United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland</b>
<b>Estonia</b>	<b>Monaco</b>	<b>Yugoslavia</b>
<b>Finland</b>	<b>Netherlands</b>	
<b>France</b>	<b>Norway</b>	
<b>Germany</b>	<b>Poland</b>	
	<b>Portugal</b>	

## Europe's Key Activities Organised from 2013 to 2020

- ICEVI Europe is continuing to enhance its cooperation with the European Coalition for Vision by participating in its activity of promoting indicators on the prevention of visual blindness.
- ICEVI-Europe is strengthening the special interest groups within the Europe region.
- The European Forum Against Blindness (EFAB), a member of the European Coalition for Vision (ECV), has produced the second edition of the "Your Eyes" Manual. In continuation of its ongoing cooperation with the ECV, ICEVI-Europe has

endorsed this Manual, which aims to encourage early diagnosis in blindness prevention and highlight the issues of vision loss.

- A European Survey on Early Intervention was carried out by the DATO Group in Spain, a group devoted to boosting Early Intervention (EI) all around the country, in cooperation with ICEVI–Europe, as an initial starting point in organizing the Early Intervention Interest Group by investigating the current status of EI in various European Countries.
- Organised the 8th European Conference on Education and Rehabilitation of People with Visual Impairment from 30th June to 5 July 2013 in Istanbul, Turkey.



- Organised ICT sixth international conference for Eastern European countries on 10 - 12 October 2013 in Chernigov, Ukraine.



- Conducted the international conference on enabling access for persons with visual impairment in Athens, Greece from 12 to 14 February 2015.
- Working with war affected countries in the region to assist persons with disabilities in general and persons with visual impairment in particular.
- A series of webinars were hosted by ICEVI Europe through Zoom.

## Europe's 2023 Activity Report

### Regional Conferences:

The majority of the efforts of the ICEVI Europe in the current year to date have been focused on closely collaborating with the colleagues at the Robert Hollman Foundation, the Italy Host Committee, in getting the 10<sup>th</sup> ICEVI European Conference prepared. This is considered to be a milestone conference in celebration of the 10-year Anniversary of European Conferences of ICEVI-Europe and the first time it will be held in Italy.

## **Save the Date! 10th ICEVI European Conference**

**Dates:** May 15-17, 2025 in Padova, Italy

**Title & Theme:** “Supporting Children and Young Adults with Visual Impairment: What can we do? What can be done?”

**Venues:** Town Hall and University of Padova

Hoping to bring together a wide range of professionals from all over Europe, the region aims for this conference to focus on how support, using a multidisciplinary approach, can foster a better quality of life for children and young adults with visual impairment.

The scientific contributions will be an opportunity to share and circulate/discuss experiences related to supporting children and young adults with visual impairment within four important areas of interest: medical/psychological care, education, habilitation/rehabilitation, autonomy (agency), and mobility and orientation.

In the meantime, and in the run-up to the European Conference, professionals will be involved in a co-participatory process in order to identify the essential theoretical principles of a multidisciplinary approach to supporting children and young adults with visual impairment. The final objective will be the drafting of the shared European Key Principles document that will be approved on the final day of the Conference; it will then be made available as an operational tool for all professionals involved in the support of children/young adults with visual impairment and their families.

Designated members of the board and all the members of the Italy Host Committee who formed the Program Committee, organized 3 virtual meetings to date in 2023 in order to discuss developments in the preparations of this event.

### **Program Committee Meetings of the 2025 European Conference in Padova:**

- February 27, 2023
- April 3, 2023
- August 31, 2023

## **ISPAIVID 2023**

**2<sup>nd</sup> International Symposium on Physical Activity and Individuals with Visual Impairments or Deafblindness held June 8-10, 2023 – Parma, Italy**

**Conference Website:** <https://sportrealeyes.it/en/ispaviparma2023/>

The International Symposium on Physical Activity and Visual Impairment or Deafblindness was an opportunity for scholars, practitioners, and parents with similar interests to share research and practice. Attendees had the opportunity to learn about cutting edge research, new equipment usage, new sports, impactful programs, and resources for consumers and families.

ICEVI-Europe proudly endorsed this event. The President of ICEVI-Europe was invited as a Speaker during the Opening Ceremony introducing the mission and role of ICEVI-Europe. Dr. Ravenscroft also gave a presentation on the topic “Cerebral visual impairment and physical activity in the UK: A parent’s perspective.”

**French speaking ICEVI-Europe Conference: A one-day Conference in French for teachers and other professionals about inclusive education was held June 9, 2023 in Suresnes, France.**

Venue : **INSEI (Institut national supérieur de formation et de recherche pour l’éducation inclusive)**

Theme : **“Digital Technology & Students with Visual Impairment: What’s New?”**

This is the fourth conference in its series (since 2019) that has been organized by INSEI (Institut national supérieur pour l’éducation inclusive – the National Institute for Inclusive Education, formerly INSHEA: <https://www.inshea.fr/fr>), in partnership with ICEVI-Europe, and takes place annually.

Aimed at teachers, researchers, professionals and parents involved in the education of visually impaired young people, this French Speaking Day allowed researchers to present their research and innovations and served as an opportunity for teachers and professionals to share their experiences and show the adaptations they have designed in the digital field. There were plenary sessions, interactive workshops and a round table discussion.

Approximately one hundred people attended the conference. Almost half of them were teachers for the visually impaired, but there were also psychologists, transcribers, librarians, orthoptists, occupational therapists, O&M instructors, teachers’ assistants, parents, INSEI students, researchers and teacher trainers who came from all regions of France. Unfortunately, this year, there were no participants from Belgium but there were two persons from Switzerland.

Key presentations included: (a) a project aiming to make sciences more accessible to people with a visual impairment through a Moodle platform; (b) some of the useful



resources about visual impairment which are on the ORNA (Observatoire des ressources numériques adaptées – digital adapted resources) website (these are part of the INSEI resource collection covering a variety of special educational needs); (c) two sessions about unplugged computers and their adaptation: how a teacher can very easily create an auditory landscape or a story and use it with students by recording various sounds with his/her cell phone (participants were able to try the technique for themselves in the beautiful INSEI park); and (d) a round table discussion included specialist teachers in elementary and secondary inclusive schools, who pointed out the interesting challenges of supporting digital learning and teaching the use of IT devices. These highlighted presentations were just a few of the interesting and stimulating topics that participants enjoyed.

## **Projects & Collaborations:**

### **Erasmus+ Project: oMERO Project (an EU Curriculum for Visual Disabilities Rehabilitators)**

A summary of the oMERO Project and its main innovative results can be found published on the website: <https://www.visualrehabilitator.eu/>

The oMERO Project aimed to develop a job description (“Professional Profile; PP”) and official, EU-approved Curriculum for a Visual Disabilities Rehabilitator (VDR), who provides psychophysical and sensory rehabilitation services in a new transdisciplinary, person-centered, and ICT-based approach.

During the project’s startup phase, ICEVI-Europe sent a Letter of Recommendation (letter of support) to the Project Coordinator expressing ICEVI-Europe’s interest in contributing to the dissemination of the oMERO Project results through its website and newsletter and through workshops and during conferences.

ICEVI-Europe proudly supported and endorsed the oMERO Project, which formally ended on **July 21, 2023 in Genova, Italy** with a **Final Conference Event** held at the **University of Genova**.

ICEVI-Europe promoted the Final Conference Event on its website and via its newsletter mailing list, encouraging ICEVI-Europe members to register and participate in the conference online, in the event they were not able to attend in person. The Project Coordinator, Fondazione David Chiossone (Italy), invited a member of the ICEVI-Europe Board to speak at the Final Conference, joining the International Round Table: *“Training and occupational perspectives in rehabilitation in response to user needs”* with the participation of international stakeholders from Academies, Institutions,

Companies and End Users, & Associations related to the rehabilitation in visual disability.

The Vice-President of ICEVI-Europe, Andrea Hathazi, Associate Professor, Ph.D. attended the Final Conference and participated as a Speaker representing both ICEVI-Europe & Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, Romania with a presentation entitled: *“The role of organizations in the development of professional competences through Erasmus+ European projects.”*

### **Joint Webinar on Visual Impairment and Relations, Intimacy, and Sexuality.**

**Date: September 21, 2023 at 15:00-17:00 CET**

On September 21, for almost 2 hours during the afternoon, [ENVITER](#) and ICEVI-Europe hosted a [Joint Webinar on Visual Impairment and Relations, Intimacy, and Sexuality](#).

All blind or partially sighted people (from 0 to 100), regardless of their intellectual ability, should have access to correct knowledge about their body, relations, intimacy, and sexuality and should be given the opportunity to experience this all according to their wants and needs. This statement is the rationale for the work at the national Dutch expertise group on relations, intimacy, and sexuality (RIS), made up of members from 3 different organizations: Royal Dutch Visio, Bartiméus and the Robert Coppes Foundation. And they invited all interested professionals to join an interactive international webinar on September 21 and share experience and knowledge: sexual development in the lifecycle, practical information and materials, results from scientific research project, personal stories from clients, casuistry, and ideas for attitude and conversations on this topic.

The topic of the webinar proved to be very interesting and highly relevant to the members of both the ENVITER Network & ICEVI-Europe, as over 100 professionals registered to participate and share their knowledge, expertise and good practices.

A representative of ICEVI-Europe attended the Joint Webinar and introduced the aims and work of ICEVI and highlighting the importance of supporting professionals in the field of visual impairment and collaborating in projects that benefit not only professionals but also people with visual impairment and their families.

[You can find the recording of this Webinar on ENVITER'S website and in ENVITER's Youtube channel](#). Given the success of the webinar, ICEVI-Europe & ENVITER hope to organize many more joint events in the future.

### LEGO Braille Bricks Research Project:

In the year 2023, ICEVI-Europe continued to support the Research Project aimed at understanding the impact of LEGO Braille Bricks on learners with significant visual impairment. This study is led by the University of Edinburgh, Scotland and includes research partners such as Perkins School for the Blind, Royal National Institute of Blind People, American Printing House, and i2Media.

A survey for education practitioners from the United Kingdom (UK), the United States of America (USA), the European Union (EU), and other parts of the world was put together in 3 languages (English, French & German) and disseminated widely across the ICEVI-Europe Membership Network. The survey explored education and other practitioners' perceptions and knowledge of LEGO Braille Bricks. The results of this survey will help us to understand what practitioners know about LEGO Braille Bricks. It will also help us to further understand the impact they create and to identify the need for future training and resources. This survey will inform discussion questions for focus groups with education practitioners and children with visual impairment in further stages of the project.

### ICEVI-Europe Board Meetings:

- **Face-to Face Board Meeting held May 22 & 23 2023 in Edinburgh, Scotland** at the Scottish Sensory Centre, at the Moray House School of Education and Sport, University of Edinburgh, Scotland. The members of the board agreed to the appointment of a new Board Member representing the South European Countries region & the National Representative of Spain (subject to the approval of the General Assembly), replacing her predecessor. The topics on the agenda focused mainly on updates from the Italy Host Committee on various aspects pertaining to the 2025 European Conference in Padova, the topic of professional interest groups and how to revitalize them to deliver maximum impact across Europe, as well as, the purpose of ICEVI-Europe and its Plan of Action (Strategy) in the coming years.
- **Virtual Board Meeting held October 20, 2023** via Zoom to discuss ICEVI Global Funding for ICEVI World Conference & General Assembly: 14-17 November 2024 in Ahmedabad, India

### ICEVI-Europe Professional Interest Groups:

#### Cerebral Visual Impairment (CVI):

ICEVI-Europe has aimed to start another professional interest group on Cerebral Visual Impairment thanks to the initiative and efforts of our esteemed colleagues from ICEVI –

Europe's longstanding member organization, Royal Dutch Visio, who are taking the lead with this group. As such, the region begun developing the First ICEVI Cerebral Visual Impairment Working Group.

Recently, the ICEVI Europe region distributed a questionnaire to its members & non-members aiming to map the organisations and persons who are supporting children and young adults with cerebral visual impairment (CVI) and to determine interest in setting up such a professional interest group.

**Link to questionnaire on the proposed ICEVI professional network CVI :**  
<https://forms.office.com/e/Ae04ZMBgqgZ>

It is still in the early stages but the region looks forward to receiving the results of the questionnaire and hopefully expanding this group to all interested members soon.

### **Website & Newsletter:**

The Website and Newsletter Mailing List are two important mediums used by ICEVI-Europe in order to communicate with current and prospective members who support the aims of the association.

Newsletter Issues and the website are updated with actual news and announcements relating to ICEVI-Europe activities and events, as well as, with the latest developments in research, projects, and best practices shared by specialists in the field of visual impairment. For the year under review to date, ICEVI-Europe has published and disseminated 2 regular issues of its Newsletter Publication for members and interested parties and plans to publish its 3<sup>rd</sup> and last newsletter issue of 2023 in December.

## **Latin America Region**

The Latin American Region includes the countries of:

**Argentina**

**Bolivia**

**Brazil**

**Chile**

**Columbia**

**Costa Rica**

**Cuba**

**Dominican Republic**

**Ecuador**

**El Salvador**

**Guatemala**

**Honduras**

**Mexico**

**Nicaragua**

**Panama**

**Paraguay**

**Peru**

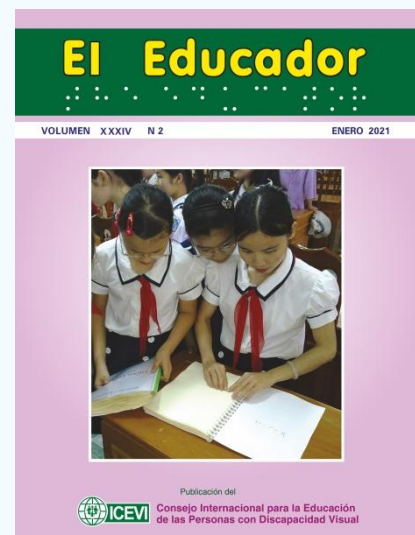
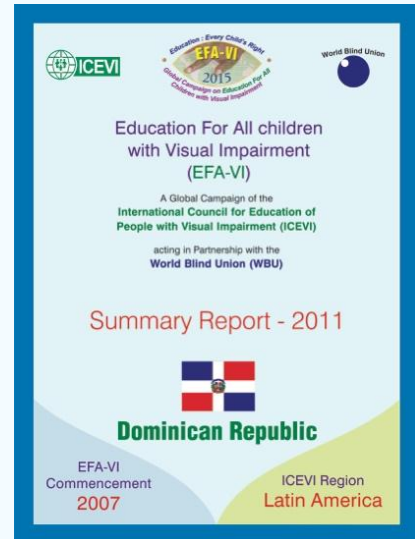
**Uruguay**

## Latin America's Key Activities from 2013 to 2020

- ICEVI Latin America implemented EFA-VI global campaign activities in Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Paraguay.
- ICEVI Latin America organised a series of capacity building programmes as a part of the global campaign covering the areas Braille literacy and related topics, Teaching of mathematics, Universal design for learning and reasonable adjustments, Low vision and school settings, Rehabilitation strategies, Training on deafblindness and multiple disabilities, Inclusive education and training for parents, families and stakeholders in the society.

Other activities from 2013 to 2020 included:

- Using social media for publicising LA activities.
- Publishing The Educator in Spanish version.
- Networking with every organisation in the region.
- Organizing capacity building programmes during the calendar year 2014 in most of the Latin American countries.
- Implementing a project to monitor standards in education in collaboration with Latin American Governments.
- Partnering with the UNESCO regional office in Latin America in organising their regional conference on ICT, in Costa Rica later in 2016.
- Registering the region as a legal body in Uruguay on 27th April 2016.
- Actively promoting a parents' movement. Many capacity building programmes for parents were organised in the region.
- Conducting collaborative activities with the Latin American Union of the Blind (ULAC), Once Foundation for Latin America (FOAL), Caribbean Network of Non-Governmental Organizations of Persons with Disabilities and their Families (RIADIS, in Spanish).
- Conducted the Southern Cone Sub-regional Conference from 7th to 9th May 2019.



## Latin America's Quadrennial Plans-2021-2025

### Background

ICEVI Latinoamerica, a region of ICEVI Global, believes that for achieving a truly quality inclusive education for all, it is necessary to advocate before the regional governments for the improvement of budgets for education, as well as to raise awareness and to strengthen all the stakeholders involved in education: rehabilitation professionals, educators, families, and students with visual impairment. Thus, for the quadrennial 2021-2024, ICEVI Latinoamerica will focus on developing the aforementioned actions and those activities that can diminish the negative effects the COVID-19 pandemic has had on education, including the elaboration of technical documents and improving the training of the professionals who work in the field of visual impairment.

As a result, we are submitting to ICEVI Global the budget proposal for the period 2021-2024, based on the need for the implementation of actions that promote the fulfilment of Section 24 of the CRPD and SDG 4, for conducting joint activities with our strategic allies, and for developing the different activities that were proposed as a result of the monitoring process of the inclusive education (2018-2021) in the countries of the Latin America region.

Among other actions, we are planning training activities for professionals and teachers that work with students with visual impairment to grant the academic success of the students; activities to raise awareness on the right to an inclusive education through multimedia material and technical documents aimed at families, public officers and stakeholders; activities to boost the development of skills and abilities for the people with visual impairment that participate in rehabilitation processes to achieve full inclusion in the community; and online technical training courses of 40 hours of length each, that include evaluations before, during, and after the course for granting the acquisition of knowledge in the different topics.

We also seek to provide technical and financial resources to the administration of the organization and the educative leaders of the 5 subregions and the past president, who support the development of all the activities and provide advising.

The investment is mainly aimed at paying the fees of the teachers and lecturers of the on-line courses, and the fees of the researchers that will elaborate the technical documents; and to support the actions that will strengthen the educative leadership,



developing reasonable adjustments, and raising awareness of the stakeholders involved in the teaching and learning process of students with visual impairment in the region.

## Latin America's 2023 Activity Report

Considering that governance and democracy are a necessity in organizations, ICEVI Latin America has worked in 2023 to restructure its representations among affiliates from 7 countries and 2 subregions. The delegations will remain in their positions for 4 years, with the new delegations being 80% composed of women, and 75% of new professionals who are beginning to join the work in each country.

In each annual renewal, a technical day is held that addresses topics such as: Working with families, orientation and mobility, inclusive education, early care for children with visual disabilities, among others. Each conference takes place over two days, and brings together persons affiliated with professionals related to the specific topics who draw on the technical work developed during the conference.

The countries in 2023 were: Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama, and the subregions were Andean (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela) and the Southern Cone (Argentina, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay).

Training being one of the main activities of the Latin America region, the Semester 4 virtual courses resulted in 94 professionals trained in the areas of: IT teaching for children with visual disabilities; Universal Design for Learning; attention to students diagnosed with cortical vision impairment at school; and instructional design “from the expert to the facilitator.”

In the area of work with children, the 2 groups of children with visual disabilities from Latin America, “Listening to Their Voices,” have remained active. During this second semester they held a discussion about bullying and bad jokes, which was led by the children with the accompaniment of an expert psychologist in the area. They have also prepared a video within the framework of the day of persons with disabilities, a video where they are shown carrying out daily life and educational tasks to raise awareness that they have skills and abilities to do whatever they want as long as they have the guidelines and the training, this being what allows them to be included in society as equals and is what ICEVI Latin America fights for.

In the dissemination area, all events related to typology and education, which come from ICEVI Global or its partners, have been shared through email lists and social networks. The work of constantly updating our Facebook, Instagram and website has also been developed with the collaboration of the ICEVI Latin America dissemination team made up of the Andean, Southern Cone, and Central American and Caribbean coordinators, accompanied by the former president of ICEVI Latin America. Likewise, the semi-annual newsletter was prepared and distributed in digital format and the region worked on editing a series of 20 videos providing guidance on mathematics aimed at teachers and which, starting December 10, will also be on the YouTube channel of the Latin America region.

The region has participated in 10 webinars where the presenters talked about disability and education. Presentations were made by the 7 members of the ICEVI Board of Directors in countries such as Argentina, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

A manual on the rehabilitation of people with visual disabilities in Latin America was also prepared together with the ONCE Foundation for solidarity with blind people in Latin America and the Latin American Union of the Blind. The manual was prepared by the southern zone coordinator, and included the collaboration support of 42 professionals from 12 countries in the region, of which 35 are proud members.

Within the alliance actions, a significant action is that the region is about to be part of the Inclusive Education Network of Latin America with whom common objectives are shared and where the region can contribute technically to the impact on issues of visual disability. Secondly, the region hopes before the end of 2023 to establish a cooperation agreement with the National Open University of Venezuela. The university will certify the training provided by the ICEVI Latin America region in the future.

All of these actions are due to the voluntary work of the 7 members of the Board of Directors of ICEVI Latin America, who meet virtually each month to plan, evaluate and follow up on the operational plan of the ICEVI Latin America region.



## North America and the Caribbean Region

The North American Caribbean Region includes the following countries:

**Antigua and  
Barbuda**

**Bahamas**

**Barbados**

**Belize**

**Canada**

**Dominica and Saint  
Kitts**

**Grenada**

**Guyana**

**Haiti**

**Jamaica**

**Nevis**

**Saint Lucia**

**Saint Vincent and  
the Grenadines**

**Trinidad and Tobago**

**United States of  
America**

### North American/Caribbean's Key Activities from 2013 to 2020

- The ICEVI North America/Caribbean region is focusing on advocacy and capacity building.
- The ICEVI NAC region spearheaded the creation of a new Division of the USA-Canada professional organization, the Association for Education and Rehabilitation (AER) of the Blind and Visually Impaired. This new Division will be mutually beneficial to both AER and ICEVI by bringing new individual members into each organization and by sharing resources.
- Though advocacy is at the regional level the capacity building activities focused on Saint Vincents and the Grenadines (SVG), where ICEVI-NAC held a week-long teacher training workshop. The training areas included pedagogy, orientation and mobility, working with parents, curriculum access, and inclusion. The region proposes to explore possibilities of similar training in other countries in the Caribbean region.
- WBU collaboration in the region was strengthened.
- Building a parent network in the region is underway.
- The region has already initiated collaboration with key partners from the US, Canada and the Caribbean region and expected to draw professional and in kind support from these organisations for augmenting educational services for persons with visual impairments in the region.

- During the 2016 regional meeting, the membership agreed to the election of 3 Deputy Presidents—one each from Canada, the Caribbean, and the United States—in order to strengthen leadership in the region.
- In 2019 ICEVI NAC held its first week-long teacher training seminar in conjunction with the Ministry of Education and other partners (WBU-NAC, parents, and the Voice of the Disabled) in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. We developed a curriculum and held a successful week long Teacher Training institute with 20 regular education teachers and simultaneously a conference for parents and adults with disabilities. WBU also participated and worked to bring adult consumers into the WBU. As a result of the project the Ministry of Education began allowing children who are blind to be mainstreamed into the public schools.
- The first online election for President and Deputy Presidents was held in 2020.
- One of the key objectives of the region is to make ICEVI-NAC region as a legal body.
- The region is also proposes to organise a regional conference in conjunction with the AER conference.
- The North America and Caribbean Regional ICEVI office was established at The New York Institute for Special Education (NYISE).



- ICEVI NAC held its second Teacher Training for the Education of Students who are Visually Impaired in collaboration with the Trinidad and Tobago Blind Welfare Association (TTBWA) and the Ministry of Education of Trinidad and Tobago in July 2022.



## North American/Caribbean's Quadrennial Plans-2021-2025

### Background

During the 2016-2020 quadrennium we initiated a relationship with the Ministry of Education in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and helped with capacity building of a parent network and the Voice of the Disabled, an organization for persons who are blind and disabled. The summer teacher workshop and parent training planned for 2020 was canceled due to the peak of the pandemic. Recently Saint Vincent has experienced an environmental disaster, a volcanic eruption, that has devastated the country.

Even with great accomplishments moving forward towards the education of children who are blind, there are challenges that need to be addressed for implementation of true inclusion for the education of children with visual impairments in Saint Vincent:

- Currently there are no trained Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVIs) to provide instruction in Braille or Orientation and Mobility (O&M) in the country.
- Internet connections and access is poor, making on-line learning difficult or impossible.
- How can we offer disaster relief in special education with the aftermath of the volcanic eruption?
- The WBU North America and Caribbean Regional President Charles Mossop became involved with our project initially as a guest speaker during our 2019 Summer Training Conferences. Since then, he has followed up his capacity building efforts by re-establishing the Saint Vincent and the Grenadines WBU organizational membership. WBU is looking to continue its collaboration with ICEVI-NAC Regional and to establish a development fund to expand similar work in other countries of the Caribbean that are experiencing similar challenges.

Priority areas for ICEVI North America and Caribbean Regional Quadrennial Plan:

### I. Advocacy

The suggestion by ICEVI Global is to take their Global Campaign Education for All from the advocacy level to the policy level with each region to design their own programs and identify their activities for the quadrennium and which are influencing policy making bodies to accommodate education of children with visual

impairments in mainstream programs. As stated above, during the previous quadrennium NAC ICEVI Region has been working at this level of movement from the advocacy level to the policy level and becoming partners at the government level of St. Vincent's and the Grenadines. During this new quadrennium FY 2021-2024, we intend to re-connect and continue our collaboration with the Government and the Ministry of Education of Saint Vincents and the Grenadines (SVG) and to confer with them on how we can be of support to their country and to special education for students with visual impairments and their families during the aftermath of the pandemic and the volcanic eruption.

As we have established this type of advocacy work with the Government of Saint Vincents and the Grenadines, we would like to further expand our reach of success in other countries within the Caribbean with similar needs with the following strategies:

- Frame the SVG Project of how we were able to be successful moving from advocacy to the policy level.
- Organize and hold webinar entitled: "One Not Without the Other: Collaborative Partnerships Between North America and Caribbean Region and Stakeholders in St. Vincent's and the Grenadines to Support Inclusion."
- Offer technical support, including offering guidance to other Caribbean countries via zoom meetings to assist with capacity building, strategic planning, and advocacy. Pilot the program with the country of Belize. The Belize Council for the Visually Impaired is seeking training support designed to meet their educational needs in their country.
- Offer educational workshops for parents and teachers through a hybrid model of in-person and/or virtual trainings and written materials.

## **II. Partners in Collaboration**

Recommendation from ICEVI Global is to collaborate and network with other international and regional organizations on awareness activities about the rights of the education of children who are visually impaired. Listed here are organizations we have been working with and those who have recently expressed an interest to collaborate with us:

- The Caribbean Council for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CCB), led by CEO Arvel Grant, is working to establish the Caribbean College of Special Needs Educators and/or the University of Special Education Studies as an

on-line special education training programs. We will continue our ICEVI-NAC Regional position on the advisory board to keep abreast of the project and consider ways we can collaborate and be of support to the project.

- The Canadian National Institute of the Blind (CNIB) represented by ICEVI Delegate Charles Mossop, has a special interest to collaborate on training on capacity building, advocacy, and government relations with organizations in the Caribbean Region.
- World Blind Union North America and Caribbean Region has been investigating the potential of creating a development fund for the Caribbean. ICEVI-NAC will keep in communication with the WBU NAC Region through our participation in its annual meetings.
- The Trinidad and Tobago Welfare Association has recently become a new organizational member of ICEVI. Kenneth Suratt, Executive Officer is very interested to collaborate with us to promote the education of children who are visually impaired. The organization has an interest in building a Training Center for the Caribbean countries. ICEVI-NAC will collaborate with their organization to coordinate programs in advocacy, capacity building, parent education, and teacher training.
- ICEVI-NAC plans to collaborate more closely with AER's International Services and Global Issues. There is great potential for collaboration on teacher training through the knowledge and experience of their individual professional members of sharing their time and expertise with our capacity building projects.
- Additional organizations that have state of the art international programs that we will engage as collaborative partners with are Perkins; Overbrook School for the Blind; Hadley Institute; American Printing House for the Blind; American Foundation for the Blind; Council of Exceptional Children, Division of the Visually Impaired; Council of Schools for the Blind and more.

### **III. Building Our Network**

There's a need for networking and support between small nations within the Caribbean that have small populations of individuals with visual impairments.

We aim to engage more collaboration and networking amongst the organizations for the blind, professionals, and parents in United States and Canada.

Increase attention to membership, particularly of organizations. Our membership can be the best human and financial resource for ways to continue our work.

Steps to take:

- Establish network friendly database.
- Integrate existing network available from previous quadrennium.
- Build in new contacts as we grow.

#### **IV. Capacity Building**

In all of our program development of the way that we deliver our services we will emphasize building a virtual presence for the work in the region through zoom meetings and workshops to provide support, education, and sustaining connections with leadership teams, community groups and their countries. Sustainability is key to moving forward. We must recognize that not having access to internet connections is also a reality, and we may from time to time when feasible need to offer in-person trainings and to also make written materials available. Moving forward we will look towards a hybrid model to provide our advocacy, support and education programs.

The three main target audiences that we will organize and provide our advocacy, support, and education programs will be:

Parents: Organize and hold live zoom parent support and education meetings and record for posting on ICEVI-NAC's web section.

Teachers: Make connections with strong organizations to provide professional development training and resources.

Disability and Blindness Associations: Provide workshop training of capacity building, advocacy, and government relations.

The North America and Caribbean Region intends on effectively using all available communication channels, such as the ICEVI Global and regional websites, social media (by actively and consistently posting news), and posting recorded workshops and activities on ICEVI-NAC section of the ICEVI website.

#### **IV. Regional Conference**

During this quadrennium we will embark on the first ICEVI Regional Conference in collaboration with AER: "A Day of Virtual Conference."



ICEVI NAC Deputy President of Canada has been in communication with AER Chairs of the Professional Development Division and International Services and Global Issues Division. AER has been discussing how their virtual professional trainings could be made more accessible to an international audience. We are looking at the potential to focus early efforts for English speaking Caribbean countries.

## **V. Operational**

Establishment of North America and Caribbean Regional ICEVI office at the New York Institute of Special Education.

The ICEVI-NAC Regional Executive team has determined it is in the best interest of ICEVI NAC Regional to incorporate as a not for profit organization. The regional board will determine the region's ongoing governance structure and for guidance on how to proceed with the international legalities of forming the organization.

For now, Bernadette Kappen, CEO of the New York Institute for Special Education (NYISE) has agreed to be the legal entity that will be the umbrella for the ICEVI regional funds, since ICEVI NAC is not yet incorporated. ICEVI Global has encouraged all the regions to incorporate (the NAC Region is the only region not incorporated).

## **North America/Caribbean's 2023 Activity Report**

### **1. Advocacy, Teacher Training and Parent Education Programs**

ICEVI North America and Caribbean Region (ICEVI NAC) organized a Regional Conference “Transforming Lives Through Education” in Collaboration with its organizational members with hosts Trinidad and Tobago Blind Welfare Association (TTBWA) at their headquarters in Port of Spain, along with The Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) and World Blind Union (WBU) North America and Caribbean Region and enlisted major involvement and support from The Ministry of Education of Trinidad and Tobago July 17-21, 2023. Each of the five days of the conference had a focus/theme:

Day one: Ophthalmology - Childhood Eye Conditions, Early Intervention and Parents/Family.

Day two: Understanding Disabilities and Human Rights, Advocacy.

Days Three through Five: Teacher Training, with educational topics including: how blindness and visual impairments impact growth and development; diverse abilities in the classroom; introduction to access (assistive) technology; digital alternate format materials; the expanded core curriculum; Universal Design for Learning.

Key expert presenters included ICEVI NAC Presidents and Deputy Presidents, CNIB Leaders, via remotely and in person. Presenters from Trinidad and Tobago included a local ophthalmologist and leaders from the National Library Service (who introduced alternate format materials with a special emphasis on how educators can access on behalf of students).

Conference Participants included approximately 125 student aides, diagnostic specialists, parents, and service providers. Of these, the Ministry of Education supported 63 special education teachers and leadership staff from the Ministry of Education to participate for the week of educational learning on the education of children with visual impairments. The ICEVI North America and Caribbean Conference “Transforming Lives Through Education” was featured on Caribbean News, one of the largest mainstream news stations representing all the islands and countries in the Caribbean Region.

## 2. Partners in Collaboration

Listed below are membership organizations the region has been actively collaborating with in FY 2023:

**American Printing House for the Blind (APH)** is an organizational member of ICEVI. APH is a primary resource for publications, media, and curriculum in the US and is shared as a resource for knowledge.

**Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AERBVI)** is the premier professional organization of and for educators, rehabilitation and administrators in the field of Blind and Visually Impaired in North America. They also have a Division of International Services and Global Issues. ICEVI-NAC and AERBVI collaborate closely together with the exchange of professional expertise in education and rehabilitation. AERBVI will be serving as a Delegate to the ICEVI World Conference and General Assembly in November 2024.

**Canadian National Institute of the Blind (CNIB)** is an organizational member of ICEVI that has contributed towards the ICEVI NAC Regional Conferences in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago by sponsoring Canadian presenters.

**Caribbean Council for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CCB)** has created the Caribbean College of Special Needs Educators, an online independent college to serve residents of the Caribbean interested in teaching students with visual impairments, blindness, and those with multiple disabilities. ICEVI NAC serves on the advisory board and on committees creating the curriculum.

**New York Institute for Special Education (NYISE)** gives in-kind support to ICEVI NAC to be the legal entity umbrella for regional funds. The NYISE Director of Fiscal Affairs handles all ICEVI-NAC's financial affairs under the direction of the ICEVI-NAC's Executive Officers and ICEVI Global's financial policies and procedures.

**Trinidad and Tobago Blind Welfare Association (TTBWA)**, The Executive Director serves on our Regional Board and is a Delegate to the General Assembly in 2024. TTBWA is a main financial contributor to the ICEVI-NAC conferences by providing the conference site location at their agency and providing meals for conference participants. As part of their organizational goals they plan to expand and become a training site for other Caribbean Countries.

**World Blind Union North America and Caribbean Region** has been a partner with ICEVI-NAC to help build capacity within the blindness communities in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, and other Caribbean countries.

## Pacific

The Pacific Region includes the countries of:

**Australia**

**Cook Islands**

**Fiji**

**Federated States of  
Micronesia**

**Kiribati**

**Marshall Islands**

**Nauru**

**New Zealand**

**Palau**

**Papua New Guinea**

**Samoa**

**Solomon Islands**

**Tonga**

**Tuvalu**

**Vanuatu**

## Pacific's Key Activities from 2013 to 2020

- The EFA-VI global campaign activities were implemented in Fiji and Papua New Guinea.
- South Pacific Educators in Vision Impairment (SPEVI) Biennial Conference was held in Auckland New Zealand on 13 to 18 January 2013.
- The 2015 Pacific EFA-VI Forum was held at the University of Melbourne and attracted 40 Australian, New Zealand and Pacific Island leaders and practitioners working in the related fields of education, health, and rehabilitation of children and youth with vision impairment and other disabilities.
- ICEVI Pacific conducted teacher training in Kiribati and Solomon Islands.
- Braille literacy was promoted throughout the region.
- The region collaborated with Perkins for braille writer repair training.
- Training programmes were conducted in PNG and Fiji with the support of Perkins and CBM.
- A scoping study of the educational needs in the Pacific region, particularly in the island countries, has been completed and will form the basis for the future activities of ICEVI Pacific region.
- The first Country Champions workshop occurred in Fiji in July 2017.



# Pacific's Quadrennial Plans – 2021-2025 and 2023

## Activity Report

Summary of the current services, resources, and development priorities for the education of people who are blind or vision impaired in the Pacific Region.

### SUMMARY REPORT, NOVEMBER 2021

*“Embrace your challenges and do not be afraid to move out of your comfort zone.”*

Sisi, educator and Pacific Island woman who is blind.

Purpose: A Scoping Study was commissioned by ICEVI Pacific to gain a more detailed understanding of current educational services, resources and opportunities available to people who are blind or vision impaired in the Pacific, along with priorities and hopes for the future. This Summary Report is a synthesis of key findings. Readers are encouraged to view the full report for a more detailed description of the current situation, including case studies and more information about services, access barriers, priorities, and individual country profiles.

Participants: The research was undertaken by Mereoni Daveta and Deborah Rhodes with willing and thoughtful contributions from regional groups including the Pacific Disability Forum (PDF) and Pacific Island Forum Secretariat (PIFS) along with many officials from Ministries of Education and Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) across the Pacific.

### OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

In recent years there has been positive progress in terms of regional and national policies and plans relating to inclusive education. There is greater awareness of government responsibilities for educating all children and increased interest in committing resources for accessible and inclusive education. Overall, there is great variety among Pacific countries in terms of accessible education services. In some, there are good services and experienced educators. In others, the chances of a child who is blind or vision impaired achieving educational milestones are very low.

Across the region, there are now greater opportunities for children who are blind or vision impaired to achieve their potential, alongside their sighted sisters and brothers, than before. As inclusive education policies are implemented, and with increased

understanding of the specific elements required for students with sensory impairments to achieve academic goals, then these opportunities will increase. Inclusive education has economic and social benefits for all, through reduced dependence on other family members and increased participation in employment.

The Scoping Study found some positive signs of effort and resource-allocation toward implementation of inclusive approaches and practices in primary and secondary schools for students who are blind or vision impaired. In several countries, education systems provide some level of adaptive technology, braille, orientation and mobility and inclusive teaching strategies. At the tertiary level, universities, particularly in Fiji, and some technical and vocational education programs and providers are operating some inclusive and accessible services.

There is shared agreement among those involved in education for children who are blind or vision impaired that there is more work to be done at many levels, to build on efforts to date and make the most of available opportunities. There are some highly experienced Pacific teachers and specialist service providers, existing networks, and some existing equipment, that can form the foundation for future collaboration and effort. Current services are generally located in major urban centres and not currently available in rural locations or outer islands.

Many inter-connected elements contribute to the likelihood that a child with a vision impairment will access school and succeed in achieving their potential. At a broad level, there are cultural, systemic and institutional factors which determine attitudes towards inclusive education and resource allocations. Leadership, policy decision-making, resource-allocations, open-ness to new ideas, cultural values and relationships/partnerships interact differently in each country context. These all affect levels of commitment, effort, expertise and resources for inclusive education. Very few of these issues are within the control of individual students or their families.

Education for children who are blind or vision impaired requires specific, and in some cases, quite specialised “inputs” and resources which distinguish it from more generic aspects of inclusive education. This includes braille equipment, computers with screen reading software and magnification devices. In addition, accessible format text books are essential with specialist services necessary for the production of large print, braille, audio and electronic Word format reading materials. Independent mobility typically requires specialised expertise of an orientation and mobility instructor; such services are currently limited to a small number of Pacific countries, but there is scope for collaboration with others. Specialist inclusive teaching strategies are also important



along with ensuring a positive, encouraging and welcoming environment from school leadership, teachers, and classmates towards children who are blind or vision impaired.

Conditions which support inclusion: In order to achieve improved educational inclusion for students who are blind or vision impaired, the following conditions were identified:

- A broad social, cultural and institutional context which supports inclusion, values education and incentivises educational achievement.
- Committed leaders and officials in Ministries of Education, who are open to leading and driving change, learning, collaborating and supporting educational inclusion for people who are blind or vision impaired, consistent with regional commitments included in the Pacific Regional Education Framework (PacREF).
- Supportive parents, families and communities who recognise all of their children will benefit from accessing education and the whole community will benefit from their participation in all aspects of social and economic life.
- Principals, teachers and school communities who support inclusion (as a concept and practice), are skilled in the provision of education for children with sensory impairments, and have access to specialist resources for this cohort of students.
- Explicit policies and strategies, skilled teachers, particular technologies and supportive school communities, as well as ongoing efforts to provide resources and continuously support teachers and schools.
- Confidence among parents that their children will be safe and welcomed at school.
- Factors which influence access to education: The following factors were identified as influencing individual children's access to education:
  - a. Totally blind versus vision impaired/low vision: Children with low vision who have minimal access barriers such as the need for a hand-held magnifier are more likely to access education and for that education to be in a mainstream school. They are also more likely to remain at school for longer. Children who are totally blind are less likely to attend school, and more commonly educated in a primary-level specialist school.
  - b. Capital versus remote locations: Most specialist schools, model inclusion schools and disability services operate in capital cities, limiting opportunities for children in rural locations or outer islands. Some children who are blind or vision impaired relocate to live with extended family to access education.

- c. Overseas education: In some cases, children who are totally blind are educated overseas in specialist settings such as Fiji School for the Blind, away from family supports. Some families also relocate to Australia or New Zealand.
- d. Age of onset of vision impairment: Globally, there are differences associated with accessing education for children who are born blind or vision impaired and children who acquire an eye condition at school. Students (and their parents) who have attended school prior to becoming vision impaired may expect to continue, based on previous experience of being included and having access to information. Those with no prior experience of inclusion tend to experience charitable (if any) contributions from others and form a view their participation in education and potential are limited.
- e. School retention: Even when students are able to access primary school, progression to secondary schools may be limited. Barriers to progression include community and parental attitudes, lack of school-based or education system commitment, expertise or support and challenges in accessing curriculum and other information and lack of transport. Anecdotally, special schools in the Pacific typically take approximately two years to teach each year level of curriculum. This affects transition into secondary school: children may be 17 years old when completing primary school curriculum.
- f. Government verses charity responsibility for education: In some Pacific countries, education ministries take responsibility for provision of education for this group of students and in others, non-government organisations provide services in the absence of government services. In some Pacific Islands there is a long history of charity-based segregated schooling and often unqualified teachers.
- g. Early identification and diagnosis: Access to health services for early identification, diagnosis and treatment is limited in most Pacific countries.

## **PRIORITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

“After seven years of advocacy in relation to inclusive education, there are now signs of formal commitment by senior Pacific Education officials within the region, and while this needs to filter down to national levels, it is a positive shift.”

--CEO of Pacific Disability Forum.

The Scoping Study collated priorities from interviewees. A summary is provided below:

### **Government policies and leadership**

1. Develop/promote inclusive education policies and associated implementation plans with explicit reference to the inclusion of students who are blind or vision impaired.
2. Appoint senior education officers with an inclusive education focus and dedicated inclusive education units within Ministries of Education, who are able to influence inclusion at all levels of education.
3. Ensure a dedicated budget within the education portfolio for necessary personnel, equipment and services.
4. Establish and maintain referral systems to health and rehabilitation services.

### **Disability identification, data collection, planning and enrolment**

5. Conduct annual vision screening in all schools.
6. Record children who are blind or vision impaired in education management information systems.
7. Develop individual education plans for each student who is blind or vision impaired and use/review/update them to support and monitor inclusion.
8. Encourage enrolment in local neighbourhood schools in age-appropriate classes with relevant support.
9. Encourage enrolment in specialist schools where this is most suitable for the child, monitoring progress and supporting transition into mainstream school when ready.
10. Identify any out of school children and support their access to school.

### **Assistive devices and accessible information, including in braille**

11. Source and provide training in use of specialist assistive equipment to ensure students to have independent reading and writing tools.
12. Establish partnerships with specialist services, peak bodies and skilled volunteers to support access to assistive devices and training in this equipment.
13. Maintain/develop accessible format production services and provide timely access to Braille, large print, audio and electronic Word format for all learning materials.
14. Develop partnerships across the Pacific to support the production and supply of accessible reading materials.

15. Promote the Marrakesh Treaty as a means of improved access to books for people who are blind or vision impaired. [www.wipo.int/marrakesh\\_treaty/en/](http://www.wipo.int/marrakesh_treaty/en/) .
16. Provide braille training as a literacy tool for children who are blind or vision impaired and where relevant, establish partnerships with specialist services, peak bodies and skilled volunteers to support training and local production of Braille books.

### **Orientation and mobility**

17. Provide orientation and mobility services and access to white canes to support independent mobility, where safe and appropriate. Establish partnerships with specialist services, peak bodies and skilled volunteers to build Pacific capacity to deliver this training.

### **GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR PARTNERS**

The following suggestions are made for organisations partnering with Pacific services:

- Engage with Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) to jointly determine priorities/partnership opportunities with people who are blind or vision impaired.
- Support Pacific Ministries of Education as they seek to build on existing services for education of children who are blind or vision impaired, consistent with PACREF.
- Recognise that many people have already dedicated effort in the provision of education services for students who are blind or vision impaired and have contributed to existing knowledge, skills and equipment.
- Identify and support opportunities for collaboration and knowledge sharing. For example, a Pacific resource hub could be established to provide Braille production, repair of Perkins braille writers, adaptive technology training, orientation and mobility training and other specialist services across the Pacific.
- Draw upon existing technical expertise within networks such as ICEVI and SPEVI to support programming across the Pacific and promote knowledge-sharing opportunities for established services in the Pacific such as those in Fiji and Kiribati.

The full Scoping Study and this summary can be found at [www.icevi.org/pacific](http://www.icevi.org/pacific).

## West Asia

The West Asia Region includes the following countries:

<b>Afghanistan</b>		<b>Sri Lanka</b>
<b>Bahrain</b>	<b>Kyrgyzstan</b>	<b>Syrian Arab Republic</b>
<b>Bangladesh</b>	<b>Lebanon</b>	<b>Tajikistan</b>
<b>Bhutan</b>	<b>Maldives</b>	<b>Turkmenistan</b>
<b>India</b>	<b>Nepal</b>	<b>United Arab Republic</b>
<b>Iraq</b>	<b>Oman</b>	<b>Uzbekistan</b>
<b>Islamic Republic of Iran</b>	<b>Pakistan</b>	<b>Yemen</b>
<b>Jordan</b>	<b>Palestine</b>	
<b>Kuwait</b>	<b>Qatar</b>	
	<b>Saudi Arabia</b>	

## West Asia's Key Activities from 2013 to 2020

### Overview of Historical Endeavor and Past Quadrennial Strategy

First Quadrennial Strategy of ICEVI WA was adopted on 8th March, 2013 at Ahmedabad, India in presence of 32 representatives.

### Registration of ICEVI in WA

The Quadrennial Plan of ICEVI WA that began in 2013 placed emphasis on the following areas: (a) Involvement of stake-holders; (b) allocation of budget; (c) comparable salary of teachers; (d) inclusive training modules; (e) special education to continue; (f) residential schools under education; (g) indicators to measure the quality of education; (h) realistic data collection about children with visual impairment; (i) orientation of special educators; (j) assistive devices; (k) teaching of science and math; (l) transition from school to work; (m) braille display devices for children with deafblindness; (n) promote technology; (o) avail CSR funds as per the revised Companies Law of the Government; (p) Accessible India Campaign; (q) research; (r) the NCTE Guidelines; (s) inter-agency collaboration.

- The EFA-VI global campaign was conducted in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Palestine and Sri Lanka.

- Country Champion Programs (CCP) were conducted in India, Nepal, Bangladesh and the region is planning to organise this program in every country in the region.

- Het Lot Foundation supported 5 CCPs and sub-regional conferences are being held in the region.

- The West Asia region developed its first regional

strategic plan in 2013 and many of the activities and capacity building programmes organised during the last Quadrennium were based on the 2013 plan.

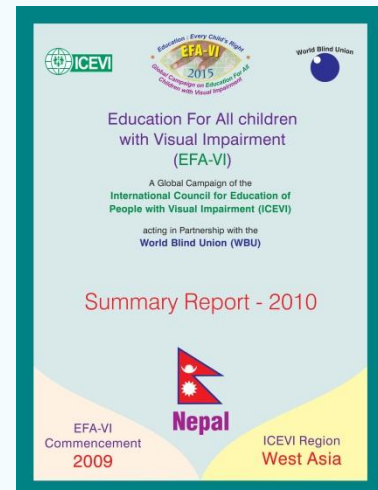
- The region is emphasising areas such as inclusion, use of technology, gender, climate change, youth development, etc., as key priority areas in conducting capacity building programmes.

- Nepal has already established a Vision Alliance coordination team for augmenting the implementation of the EFA-VI campaign.

- ICEVI and Deaf Blind International (Dbi) Joint West Asia Regional conference held in Ahmedabad, India on 5 to 7 April 2013.

- The National Conference of the ICEVI West Asia region and Asian Blind Union was organized in Ahmedabad, India from 11 to 13 March 2016.

- Workshop on Early Intervention for Teachers in India was conducted by Dr. Frances Gentle, President, ICEVI at BPA, Ahmedabad on 11 December 2017.





- ICEVI - SENSE International Joint Regional Conference was organised in Kathmandu, Nepal in February 2020.



- Organised a two week leadership training program for 20 women during 6<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> May, 2019, at Ahmedabad.

The West Asia Region also participated in the following activities:

- Handling the Covid 19 situation and its impacts in the blindness sector.
- Collaborating with IPMs working in the region.
- Sensitising stakeholders in the countries.
- Documenting good practices.
- Registered ICEVI India as a legal entity. ICEVI WA places on record its gratitude to Dr. Bhushan Punani, who supported the registration of ICEVI India as a Public Charitable Organization for the first time with official recognition of ICEVI in the region. Collaborating network with International Organizations is the on-going Process



### **Secretariat of ICEVI WA**

The Blind People's Association (India) has provided infrastructure and secretarial support since the establishment of ICEVI WA. The Office of ICEVI WA has been shifted to the office of "Action on Disability Rights And Development-Nepal" (ADRAD) in Lalitpur, Nepal, where the office of the ICEVI WA regional president Mr. Birendra Pokharel is based. The activities proposed under this Quadrennial plan will be executed by establishing a swift coordination mechanism between regional offices at BPA in Ahmedabad and ADRAD in Kathmandu applying convenient channels such as WhatsApp, E-mail and virtual platforms. The ICEVI WA shall establish transparent

mechanisms about the implementation of this quadrennial plan so that the expected outcomes of the plan can be achieved effectively.

## **West Asia's Quadrennial Plans-2021-2025**

### **Background**

Following the learning and the experiences gained during the 2017-2020 quadrennial, the ICEVI WA has embarked upon a new strategic plan for the quadrennial 2021-2025. Discourse initiated for the development of ICEVI WA Strategy at Kathmandu on 18th February, 2020 during the ICEVI and Sense International Conference. The ICEVI WA Strategy was further expanded and carried out consultation using a bottom-up approach. The series of discussions within ICEVI WA coincided with the June 2021 ICEVI WA General Assembly, which was held virtually for the first time in the history of ICEVI WA. This quadrennial strategy was discussed and the ICEVI WA meeting convened on 17th September, 2021, discussed and decided to submit to ICEVI for final endorsement.

At the outset, ICEVI WA is thankful to ICEVI and all its council members for their continued support in the past and especially in the recent time of the COVID-19 pandemic. ICEVI WA is embraced by the support of ICEVI in furthering the mission of quality education for all children with visual impairment in the West Asia Region.

### **Strategic Priorities of ICEVI WA for 2021-2025 Quadrennium**

**GOAL 1: To ensure access and full participation in education for all children and youth with visual impairment and building capacity of teachers and parents by 2025.**

#### ***Capacity Building for Teachers***

- a. Teacher training and advancement of curriculum in vision impairment will be the priority in capacity building initiatives.
- b. The curriculum may be used by educational institutions for training purposes, and by teachers in urban and rural settings. It is intended for embedding the software application as a technology based mode of training.
- c. The activities are also intended to improve the skills of regular classroom teachers to facilitate access for all children with visual impairment in appropriate pedagogy, to ensure the retention of girls and boys with visual impairment thereby reducing the dropout rate, and to increase the achievement level of

children with visual impairment in their academic, social, emotional and physical development.

- d. Enrolment of girls in terai (lowland, marshy areas near the mountains of India and Nepal) regions is far lower compared to valley, hills, and mountains, thus the teacher training in the southern part of Nepal will be focused adjoining to Bihar and Utter Pradesh of India; this approach shall be applied in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bhutan, and different states of India and other countries of the ICEVI WA.

### ***Capacity Building for Parents***

The decisions and preferences of parents have a strong influence on children's educational outcomes. Parents play a vital role as the first and foremost teachers of their children, and also play a role in transitioning their children to preschool and school, and influencing education policy. In this connection, ICEVI WA is focusing on the important role of parents and caregivers in supporting and promoting quality education for their children with vision impairment, deafblindness and other disabilities.

The activities include Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), strengthening parental capacity, and in particular, parental literacy and education awareness, orientation of parents and family members in understanding the online system of curriculum transactions and their role in enabling such children to access such material.

### ***Building Capacity of the Country Champions Programme***

The 2021-2025 Quadrennial Plan follows the past endeavor of generating a lot of interest in the ICEVI's Country Champions program for young adults with visual impairment. Some of the former participants have started movements of their own to promote the development of quality educational services for persons with visual impairment at global, regional and national levels, such as the former participants of the Country Champions program from India and Nepal showcased at the virtual ICEVI World Conference in June 2021.

1. The Country Champions Program to be organised in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, North India, and Nepal in the year 2021 and further to be extended in Bhutan, Pakistan, Palestine, and other West Asian countries is anticipated to promote participation of young people with visual impairment in ICEVI WA regional activities and to provide them with a range of skills that enable them to influence and inspire policy-makers and decision makers, and to serve as role models to other individuals with visual impairment in their home countries.

2. We seek to motivate funding, development and network organisations to organize such programs for the youth in their country
3. We plan to organize national level programs in at least 4 countries every year for selected youth with visual impairment and additional disabilities, to motivate, inform and enable them to emerge as leaders in their respective communities and countries.
4. The ICEVI's Country Champions program in 2021 shall be organised in hybrid mode due to Covid-19 pandemic and the selected countries are Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and North India.
5. Leadership Training for Women with Visual Impairment:
6. Showcase role models of ICEVI WA by presentation of awards and appointments.

**GOAL 2: To collaborate with and strengthen networks to ensure that substantially more visually impaired children and youth receive quality and inclusive education.**

### ***Networking at the Regional Level***

ICEVI WA region will explore possibilities of working with like-minded international and regional organisations and umbrella organisations such as the Asian Blind Union, International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness, DeafBlind International, World Education, etc., to bring synergy to collaborative activities. Our strategies:

1. Motivate all services providers, educational institutes, skill development centres, rehabilitation agencies, and job providers to cover children and persons with disabilities in an inclusive mode wherever possible and feasible.
2. Study and implement all declarations, legislations, policies and campaigns to various aspects of development and inclusion of persons with visual impairment and additional disabilities to ensure their inclusive development, protection of rights and access to all entitlements.

### ***Transforming the Success of EFA-VI Global Campaign***

ICEVI WA has been working on strategies to evolve a global campaign to ensure educational equity for children with visual impairment. The success of EFA-VI shall be attributed to proactive measures at the national level that will be continued in Nepal and Bangladesh as model countries in the Quadrennium. The activity also includes participation in the World Assembly of Global Campaign for Education.

### ***Organizing ICEVI WA Regional and Sub-regional Conferences and Meetings***

The ICEVI WA Region, in collaboration with Sense International India, hosted a regional conference with the theme of "Inclusive Education: Leaving No One Behind" in Kathmandu, Nepal on 16-18 February 2020. Although a Regional-level Conference, the event attracted over 300 participants from 15 countries in the West Asia region and globally. The delegates appreciated the range of sessions provided, and the plenary and concurrent sessions were well-attended.

1. ICEVI WA will organise regional and sub-regional conferences and meetings that provide the opportunity to bring educators, representatives of international nongovernmental organizations, national governments, and non-governmental organizations together to deliberate on the quality of education as well as inclusion pertaining to children with visual impairment and deafblindness. During the quadrennial (2021-2025), ICEVI WA shall organise at least 1 regional and 1 sub-regional conference and meeting. The Regional Conference was organised in Bangladesh in 2021 in hybrid method.
2. ICEVI WA and its members have been proactive in implementing the suggestions and guidelines of ICEVI to augment various activities that benefit children with visual impairment, teachers, and parents in the regions. The regional president and members of the Committee shall meet at least once a year in face-to-face mode and at least bi-annually in virtual mode in the 2021-2025 quadrennial and review the implementation status of ICEVI WA programs at the regional level and assist with the formulation of the implementation strategy for the quadrennial plan.
  - a. The activities include regional conferences on inclusive education, national conferences on inclusive education, and workshops on early intervention for teachers.
  - b. The regional conferences to be made as much "green" as possible, without printed materials.
3. Organize meetings of members and stake-holders on a regular basis to set and follow targets for the members and well-wishers as regards achievement of various components of the strategy.
  - a. All events are to be made digital with extensive use of social media.
4. Ensure more effective and well planned use of social media like website, WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and such other social media for sharing information, knowledge, and motivating stake-holders to use

the media as a reservoir of information, exchange of thoughts, and uploading of human interest stories of success.

### ***Strengthening of National Network of ICEVI***

1. The booklet entitled "Include Me" has been the inspiring product that offers insights into supporting and encouraging children with MDVI and DB to participate in home, community and educational activities. The booklet has been translated into several languages such as Odiya, Sinhala, Nepali, Hindi in the West Asia region (and 20 other languages) and has been uploaded as an open access publication. ICEVI WA plans to produce the booklet in accessible format and upload in the global online library Bookshare to provide free access to learners with vision impairment and deafblindness.
2. Collaborate with Bookshare to organize several activities, particularly "Reading Without Seeing" Workshop

### ***Climate Change***

Disability-inclusive human rights approaches to climate change education to be initiated in ICEVI WA following the ICEVI Global commitments towards Sustainable Development. The experiences of ICEVI EXCO will be enriched by following ICEVI priorities and activities in the present quadrennium, with the aim of promoting the rights of children and young people with visual impairment or other disabilities in the context of the adverse impacts of climate change.

**GOAL 3: To advance advocacy for policy adoption concerning inclusion in education and gainful employment of persons with visual impairments in their communities.**

### ***Transforming EFA-VI at the Country Level***

ICEVI Global's successful campaign called global campaign on Education For All Children with Visual Impairment (EFAVI) has to be transferred to the country level as exemplary models and strategies to increase the enrolment of children with visual impairment, thereby influencing policy-making bodies to accommodate education of children with visual impairment in its mainstream programs. The countries in ICEVI WA will identify appropriate mainstream bodies in respective countries to collaborate in order to contribute to the formulation of proactive legislations of inclusive education in National and local levels.



### ***Advocacy To Adopt Policies for Inclusive Education***

Members of the regional committees will coordinate for an effective advocacy campaign in country level policy formulation and highlight the rights to inclusive education granted by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in its Article 24. For the purpose of granting access to education for children with visual impairment, the ICEVI WA members and partners will work collectively. The activities of advocacy, include:

1. To understand, develop and implement all tools, modes and avenues for protection of rights, inclusive development, and inclusion in the mainstream of social life.
2. To establish a national coordination mechanism for the monitoring of educational program of the Governments.
3. To facilitate impact-oriented research at country levels.
  - a. Participatory Action Research to evaluate the status of inclusive education for learners with disabilities in Nepal will be coordinated by ICEVI Nepal in support of ADRAD-Nepal.
5. To coordinate with other developmental organizations, associations, NGOs, and government entities to ensure inclusion in all educational and developmental programs.
6. To collect, publish and disseminate the success stories of children with visual impairment through various means of advocacy, in order to motivate and enable others to use these advocacy tools effectively.

**GOAL 4: To ensure that accessible Information Communication Technology is adopted in Education and ICEVI initiatives are implemented in the West Asia region.**

### ***Advancing Accessible Technology in Education of Learners with Visual Impairment***

ICEVI WA recognizes that adoption of accessible technology promotes educational opportunities for girls and boys with visual impairment, which is a top priority in the quadrennial strategy. ICEVI WA believes that the collaborative approach through ICEVI's mission must be followed to promote access to inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all people with visual impairment and deafblindness.

1. Young learners shall be provided opportunities of visiting the Blind People's Association, Ahmedabad, for learning best practices of advancement of

educational opportunity and employment opportunities of persons with visual impairment.

2. The development of TTS in the Nepali language will be initiated as the light of hope for persons with visual impairment that opens avenues for educational and employment opportunities for learners with visual impairment in Nepal.
3. The open-access Mathematics Instructional Videos shall be promoted for the benefit of students and teachers.

### ***Promotion of Accessible Teaching-Learning Materials***

1. Ensure that students with visual impairment and those with additional disabilities and deafblindness have access to audio material, including accessible E-books, screen reader software, large print as per their choice and need.
2. All students have appropriate access to technology, assistive devices, appropriate software and devices for accessing educational material in the language and mode of their choice including digital online libraries.
3. Classroom teachers and educators are given appropriate training for preparing online material, handling of devices, providing feedback, and doing online evaluation.

### ***Adoption and Promotion of "Emporia" (Accessible E-Learning and Job Portal for Persons with Disabilities from the Successful Practice of CSID, Bangladesh)***

1. Collaborate with regional and national networks to promote accessible voting applying electronic voting machines.
2. Development of assessment tools for implementation of inclusive education tools.
3. Development and implementation of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) tools for effective and quality education to students with visual impairment and Deafblindness.
4. Digital literacy training to teachers and the students with visual impairment.
5. ICEVI West Asia also has a Facebook, Twitter and very popular website.

### ***Gender and Social Inclusion in Education***

ICEVI WA shall make consistent and planned efforts to cover women with visual impairment & additional disabilities and children with visual impairment and additional disabilities on top priority basis, by:

1. Providing enhanced leadership to women in the administrative structure and in all activities, projects and initiatives.
2. Providing, ensuring, and encouraging participation of parents, siblings, family members, special educators, regular educators, policy makers, and other service providers in the activities of ICEVI WA
3. Focusing on training, orientation, and sensitization of professionals, service providers, and family members, encouraging representation from under representative groups.

### ***Focus of Activities in the Context of Covid-19***

ICEVI WA will focus on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the blind and visual Impaired individuals, families, and communities that ICEVI WA supports, and the necessity to change how the ICEVI Global mission and goals can be fulfilled at ICEVI WA region, including:

1. Reviewing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education of learners with vision impairment and deafblindness, building awareness, and strengthening collaboration with schools and parents of children with blindness, low vision, and deafblindness.
2. ICEVI WA will share useful information to parents and teachers of children with visual impairment. The country representatives of ICEVI will gather country-specific information about the impact of the pandemic on children with visual impairment and communities. This information will be uploaded to a dedicated section of the ICEVI WA website.
3. The country representatives of ICEVI WA have facilitated online learning wherever possible and shared information on how to support children with visual impairment, especially during the pandemic when children are staying at home with parents.
  - a. Awareness and technical skill training for parents should also be continued as it was initiated by ICEVI WA (for example, the collaboration with Blind People's Association (BPA), India, which launched a unique initiative of providing mobile phones to students with blindness and multiple disabilities who could not afford to purchase their own phones). ICEVI West Asia and BPA obtained support for sponsoring more than one hundred mobile phones.
  - b. ADRAD supported the former participants of the country champions program with a set of Android mobile to continue their virtual classes.

4. ICEVI will organise a Webinar on "Promoting Inclusive Education in the Time of COVID-19."
5. ICEVI WA Regional Conference shall be organised on ZOOM platform in 2021 and further will be planned based on the Covid-19 context.

### ***ICEVI WA Functioning Approach***

1. Organize meetings of the members on at least a quarterly basis, either through virtual means or through face to face means, to maintain a dialogue with members and other stakeholders.
2. Organize regional, sub-regional and national level workshops, conferences, and subject specific presentations on a regular stand-alone basis or in association with similar organizations and national governments and OPDs, POs, NGOs, and INGOs.
3. Explore possibilities of registration of ICEVI at the regional level through some region specific enabling structures.
4. Seek membership, recognition, or involvement of ICEVI WA with regional entities, regional committees of international bodies or other collective regional level developmental initiatives.
5. Review, revise, and update regional policy on a regular basis, based on newer regional or national level development with a target of such revision at least before the completion of the quadrennial period.

## **West Asia's 2023 Activity Report**

The regional assembly of ICEVI WA elected Mr. Birendra Raj Pokharel (PhD), as regional president unanimously for the four years' tenure from 2021-2024. The profile of the regional president is available on the home page of ICEVI West Asia. ICEVI India is a legal entity registered as Public Charitable Trust and a Society with its registered office at Ahmedabad. The newly elected regional president and the entire team actively engaged in the fulfilment of ICEVI global objectives to make this region more functional. The activities convened during the 2023 reporting period are presented as below:

### **Participation in ICEVI Global**

ICEVI WA participated in the ICEVI Global conference 2-7 October, 2022 in Amsterdam. Other meetings were organised virtually on different dates. There were four meetings of ICEVI WA organised during the reporting period and additional 3 catch-up

meetings with the ICEVI president organised through Zoom. Four meetings of Presidents were also attended by the regional President and members. There were 7 meetings attended online for discussion on the strategic plan and thematic committee meetings, such as: (a) advocacy/influencing task group, (c) technology in education task group, (c) gender equality and women's rights task group, (d) task group on children's participation, with the goal of creating a Children's Council in each ICEVI region, and (e) deafblindness and multiple disability task group.

## **Highlights of Activities of ICEVI WA during 2023**

### **Continuation of Social Media:**

*ICEVI West Asia is continuing on social media with following URLs:*

1. Website: <https://iceviwestasia.in/>
2. Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/iceviwestasia>—871 Friends—with target of increasing friends up to 5,000
3. Twitter: <https://twitter.com/iceviwestasia>—increased number of followers
4. [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYhWTwscXr\\_926PffVSVTdw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYhWTwscXr_926PffVSVTdw)—growing number of subscribers—target to increase

### **Youth Championship Program**

There were 2 events of the Youth Championship program planned in India and 1 in Nepal. The youth participants with visual impairment between age 18-25 with promising engagement received opportunities to learn about a variety of topics, such as all-around development of these Champions. It included discussion and guidance on leadership qualities, stress management, legal provisions for visually impaired persons, time management, grooming, needs and techniques of language proficiency, role of assistive technology in the development of blind and low vision persons, modern methods and resources of education, guidance on how to prepare for competitive exams, new career opportunities, and more.

A two-day Youth Championship program was organized by ICEVI WA and Action On Disability Rights And Development (ADRAD) in Nepal 11-12 May, 2023 in Hotel Marshyangdi I. The program covered different sessions and topics to build capacity of youth persons with visual impairment. The session was meaningful, enlightening youth and promoting inclusion in education. Twenty-five visually impaired participants attended this value-creating youth championship program. The government representatives from the Ministry of Education consented their gracious presence. This youth championship program has opened a clearcut avenue for excellence/performance in education,

persons with blindness in Nepal have started to dream/desire of going to the best universities for higher studies and are acting on their dream by working hard. They have realized that qualification paired with skills actually matters.

The Youth Championship Program in India and Bhutan has been postponed to 2024 since it couldn't be conducted in 2023.

### **Leadership Training Program for Persons with Visual Impairment**

ICEVI WA is known for conducting leadership training for women with visual impairment as well as the Champion Program for Youth with Visual Impairment. ICEVI Global sponsored a leadership training program for women with visual impairment at Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, 25th to 27th March, 2023. This program was so successful that now the Varanasi team wishes to organize this training for 25 other women. A successful initiative of ICEVI Global indeed!!

**Leadership Training for Women at IIMA.** One of the most premier management institutes of India, Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad conducted a “Leadership Development” program for women with visual impairment who are involved in the management of NGOs. The program was conducted at the request of the All India Confederation of the Blind. Three officials of ICEVI India were invited as key speakers of this program. In addition, ICEVI India and BPA organised the following events which are related to capacity building initiatives of persons with visual impairment:

1. Understanding CSR Compliance and Way Forward, Ahmedabad, Ahmedabad Management Association, 23<sup>rd</sup> October, 2022
2. Born for Business—Experience of PwDs Entrepreneurs Going Global—Panel Discussion—9<sup>th</sup> National Conference on Disability, New Delhi, Sarthak, 23<sup>rd</sup> December, 2022
3. Achieving Universal Eye Health (Panel Discussion), Vision 2020 Gujarat State Network for Eye Health, Ahmedabad, 24<sup>th</sup> December, 2022
4. “Differently Abled People: Milestones of Journey” presentation during celebrations of Social Justice Day at EDI, Ahmedabad, 23<sup>rd</sup> February, 2023
5. Governance of NGOs, Leadership, and Strategic Thinking for Social Sector, Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad 380015 26<sup>th</sup> April, 2023

### **Capacity Development Training**

ICEVI WA organised capacity development training in Nepal: ADRAD and ICEVI WA jointly designed appropriate content, methodology, delivery and teaching pedagogy on



modules designed for capacity building training of teachers engaged in visual impairment. This also built the possibility of refining the teacher training modules in order to apply Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approaches and piloting same.

**Showcasing digital accessibility to visual impairment students and teachers for the use of Evo E11 DAISY player.** Action on Disability Rights and Development-Nepal and ICEVI-Nepal jointly organised the “Showcasing of accessible digital technology for persons with visual impairment,” in collaboration with the Centre for Education and Human Resource Development (CEHRD), Sano Thimi, comprised of education experts from NGOs, INGOs and the government bureaucrats. The adoption of Evo E11 DAISY player was introduced in Nepal for the benefit of children with vision impairment by assisting them in easily reading accessible books in various formats and utilizing many other functions. The Director of Inclusive Education Section at CEHRD committed to support-technology enhancement of visually impaired learners and resource teachers through training and by making EVO E11 devices available at schools in the nooks and corners of the country.

ICEVI-Nepal supported technology for accessibility and inclusion in education through BPI Foundation, Hospital for Children, Eye, ENT and Rehabilitation Services (CHEERS), whose aim is to improve learning experiences and environments for children with blindness in mainstream classroom.

ICEVI WA and ADRAD-Nepal in collaboration with World Education under LEARN project conducted a province level workshop during March and April 2023 and distributed 28 sets of Evo E 11 to the students with visual impairment. demonstration of Evo E11 DAISY player to end users is provided through tutorial which is developed and uploaded on YouTube.

**School monitoring program to facilitate digital accessibility:** ICEVI-Nepal organised a school monitoring program in the schools of learners with visual impairment in Nepal. The country representative and the ICEVI WA regional president visited four schools in the neighbouring district of the capital city in Dhading and Kavre during January and August, 2023. The monitoring of the resource schools for learners with visual disabilities, ICEVI Nepal got the opportunity to learn about the needs and aspirations of the visual impaired students and the teachers. For an example, the monitoring visit at Janajagriti Secondary School, Dhading, they were unaware about types of Text-To-Speech engines used for reading accessible content by visually impaired students using either computer, mobile or DAISY player.

ADRAD-Nepal and ICEVI-Nepal collaboratively conducted joint monitoring visits, in three provinces so far, to different schools at various provinces, to conduct orientation workshops, and to evaluate the use of the Evo E11 DAISY player. Further plans include follow-up telephone monitoring attempts on the device. The Director for Inclusive Education Section at CEHRD also gave her commitment for the support of technology enhancement for visually impaired learners and resource teachers through training and by making these devices available at schools in the nooks and corners of the country. The Benetech Regional Head and head of Asia-Africa accessible online Bookshare library interacted with the government officials of CEHRD who attended this Advisory Committee Meeting and said for policy level change, our mindset and attitude must be ready for change and to recognize that a change in government policy will not come overnight. He also identified advocacy and lobbying as the key components for policy level change. We also have to look around the examples of change brought about in other developing countries and try to absorb them into ICEVI WA.

**Inter-Country Support to War Affected People.** ICEVI WA has taken the initiative of supporting war affected persons with visual impairment at present camping in Poland. It has dispatched 200 such canes to Ari Foundation of Poland. This organization shall distribute these canes among war affected people as a support material. ICEVI is also working on sending 700 more such mobility canes to war affected people with visual impairment.

**Promoting Digital Accessibility and E-libraries.** ICEVI WA had already established 10 digital libraries in various parts of Gujarat. During this period 3 more digital libraries have been established at Bhuj, Junagadh, and Chhota Udaipur. The support for establishing these libraries has been provided by ICEVI Global through ICEVI WA. The target is to establish 100 such libraries in India. Likewise, a digital library is established and functional in Bangladesh and Nepal that is serving learners with visual impairment and deafblindness.

**Conferences and Events Jointly Organised by ICEVI WA.** ICEVI-Nepal has been demonstrating what digital literacy is like and what fully born accessible books are like, focusing on all the processes which are involved in preparing a digital book for the benefit of persons with visual impairment and other print disabilities (like Epub, Word, BRF, DAISY etc.). ADRAD conveyed that Universal Design For Learning (UDL) is the concept and process through which we can learn to adopt newer technology and other tactile material into the teaching-learning methods in the school environment, aimed at improving the quality of education of early grade learners. The earlier grade curriculum was advanced with a newer, upgraded edition, incorporating UDL, but more revision is

needed to reasonably incorporate accessibility into it. ADRAD distributed 675 sets of braille and UDL materials to the learners with visual impairment.

An extensive orientation workshop was organised on the subject matter of accessing textbooks and curriculum in various available formats like EPUB, DAISY and so on by persons with print disabilities using devices like computers and DAISY players on the 3rd of July. This workshop was organized at Janajagriti Secondary School based in Dhading, Province 3. The objective of this workshop was to introduce and demonstrate the two possible available methods of accessing documents: (a) using recorded human voice converted into DAISY, EPUB formats for accessing documents and books; and (b) using already available robotic computerized voice incorporated into DAISY and EPUB books. This demonstration also showed that some students and teachers were comfortable on human recorded voice and some were comfortable on robotic computerized text-to-speech engine as well.

In Nepal, accessible content preparation training was organised to empower and enrich experts and teachers who are involved in the production of digital books for visually impaired students and scholars and those who are involved in teaching visually impaired students. ADRAD-Nepal organized this training workshop in collaboration with ICEVI Nepal and Benetech.

**A National Workshop for Orientation and Distribution of Braille and Tactile Materials** was organized by ADRAD-Nepal, in collaboration with ICEVI and the Ministry of Women, Children and Elder Citizens/Kathmandu Metropolitan and in coordination with Rainbow Club Nepal for the Blind on the 13th of May, 2023. More than 100 enthusiastic participants were gathered in the conference, where participants included persons with visual impairment, resource teachers, college and university students, persons with vision impairment employed in various sectors. The workshop renewed individual and agency commitments to continued collaboration.

**Hope this issue of The Educator has provided a comprehensive picture of ongoing Regional Development in ICEVI.**