



**INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR EDUCATION OF
PEOPLE WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT**



(FORMERLY ICEVI NEWSLINE)

October 2007

Message from the President

October 7, 2007
London

Dear Colleagues:

As I prepare this message for the October issue of ICEVI E-NEWS I have just concluded a rather exhausting round of meetings here in London that included meetings of the ICEVI Principal Officers, the Global Task Force, the ICEVI Research Committee and the Executive Committee of the World Blind Union. This afternoon I leave for Amsterdam for yet another meeting; this time it is the ICEVI Resource Mobilization Committee.

On weeks such as this I suppose it is normal to question whether we may be doing too much talking and too little action to improve the situation of the 4 million children with visual impairments who are being denied their right to education. When this thought crosses my mind I ask myself a simple question. What would these 4 million children be thinking if they were standing quietly in the back of the room listening in on our discussions?

This week I think I can say with confidence that those children would feel both happy and encouraged.

At long last the international community seems to be working in harmony and pulling in the same direction; a direction that is resulting in some very concrete steps that are opening up educational opportunity for those children in the developing world who have been denied this basic right for far too long. The children of the world would be happy to see how well ICEVI and WBU are working together both at the global and local level to defend their rights to education. They would be pleased to see how so many of the international development organizations have come together to plan and support this global effort with programs that are working with governments to help them to include the needs of children with visual impairment within their broader "education for all" efforts.

This week I think the children would conclude that at last the rhetoric is being backed by solid action and that their hope for education is no longer just a dream but a reality that is within their reach.

I hope you will keep faith with these children by joining us in this long global march to achieve what every child wants and what is his/her basic human right...the right to a quality education.

As you read on in this issue of ICEVI E-NEWS you will see for yourself the progress that has been achieved since we launched this global campaign just over a year ago.

As always,



Larry Campbell

EFA-VI GLOBAL CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES UNDERWAY

Activities under the aegis of the Global Campaign on Education For All Children with Visual Impairment (EFA-VI) have commenced in the Dominican Republic, India, Paraguay, and Vietnam. A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed between the Government of Vietnam and ICEVI to implement various activities to expand educational opportunities for children with visual impairment. As human resource development is one of the vital ingredients for the success of the campaign, the National Technical Task Force in Vietnam is organising capacity building programmes for nearly 1000 teachers with a target of enrolling an additional 2000 children with visual impairment during the first year of the campaign. Capacity building activities have already begun in Paraguay and the Dominican Republic of the Latin America region. The region is proposing to add other countries too gradually to become focus countries for the Global Campaign and networking with the Government, International Funding organisations and local non-governmental organisations to draw the best for education of children with visual impairment. In India, ICEVI has already organised a series of awareness rallies on education of children with disabilities in collaboration with the Parivaar, the national body of parents of children with mental retardation. Bangladesh, Haiti, Nepal, and Pakistan have also submitted comprehensive plans to implement the campaign in the near future. The Global Task Force will review them soon and initiate activities. In summary, the EFA-VI campaign launched in Kuala Lumpur in July 2006 has already gained momentum. The GTF is encouraging effective use of the local networks of the ICEVI and the World Blind Union to expand the campaign activities. ICEVI has developed a dedicated section of our website for the EFA-VI Global Campaign that will provide regular updates on campaign activities in various regions of the world. ICEVI believes that more international organisations and individuals will be on board in this long journey of facilitating educational equity for more than 4 million children with visual impairment, especially from the developing regions of the world.

GLOBAL TASK FORCE MEETING IN LONDON

The Global Task Force Meeting of the EFA-VI campaign was held in London on 1-2 October 2007. In addition to reviewing the activities of the campaign, the members discussed in detail the strategies to be adopted for the Africa region, materials to be developed for the campaign and also discussed mechanism for mobilising the required resources. Members agreed in general that the campaign should make use of the existing global and regional initiatives for synergy. Phillippa Lei from the World Vision made a detailed presentation on the status of services for persons with disabilities in the countries included under the Fast Track Initiatives. Neil Thorns from the Sight Savers International enumerated the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) and the need for the EFA-VI campaign to get involved in the GCE to highlight the educational needs of children with visual impairment. Log on to www.worldvision.org

and www.campaignforeducation.org to access materials useful for the EFA campaign.

PERKINS SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

The Perkins School for the Blind, one of the founding members of the ICEVI has recently become an International Partner Member of ICEVI. ICEVI acknowledges with thanks the commitment of the Perkins School for the Blind in supporting the EFA-VI global campaign. The expertise of the Perkins in services for children with multiple disabilities and in the maintenance of assistive devices such as the Braille will be of immense value for ICEVI in realizing the objectives of the campaign. ICEVI extends special thanks to Steven Rothstein, the President of the Perkins School for the Blind for the encouragement and confidence he has expressed in the ongoing global initiatives of ICEVI.

Perkins is inviting professionals and paraprofessionals around the world for their suggestions on how to make their website www.perkins.org a more valuable resource for you and your students. ICEVI urges all of our members to participate in this survey that you may access at <http://topic101.com/survey/survey.php?sid-68>. Please take a few minutes to respond to before October 30, 2007. All responses and e-mail addresses will be held in confidence and will not be shared in any capacity.

ICEVI WELCOMES ENRIQUE PEREZ TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

ICEVI is very pleased that Enrique Perez, the Secretary General of World Blind Union and a staff member of the International Department at the National Organization of the Blind of Spain (ONCE), will be representing ONCE on the Executive Committee of ICEVI. ONCE is an active International Partner Member of ICEVI and also a member of the Global Task Force of the EFA-VI Global Campaign. Enrique's rich experience in the field of visual impairment in general and sports in particular will be of great value to ICEVI. Welcome Aboard, Enrique!!!

ICEVI – WBU MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

ICEVI and the World Blind Union (WBU) are working closely in many areas. During the previous quadrennium (2002-2006), ICEVI and WBU brought out a joint policy statement on education of children with visual impairment and also on inclusive education. At present the EFA-VI Global Campaign is implemented in partnership with the WBU. Both the organisations signed a formal Memorandum of Understanding on October 6, 2007 in London. Reciprocal membership on the executive committees of both the organisations, carrying messages on the official magazines, providing links on the websites, strengthening the global campaign

through the regional networks of both the organisations, etc., are some of the main clauses of the MOU. This MOU is helpful for both ICEVI and WBU to influence inter-governmental organisations and governments, wherever possible, in augmenting effective services for persons with visual impairment.

GLOBAL CAMPAIGN STRATEGIES FOR THE AFRICA REGION

The Global Task Force has outlined specific strategies for implementation of the campaign in the Africa region. Following the launch of the campaign during the 4th Africa Forum held in Nairobi in May 2007, ICEVI has been contacting a number of international non-governmental organisations to work together in Africa to expand educational services for children with visual impairment. The GTF reviewed the current situation in the region and suggested that the Fast Track Initiative includes many countries in the Africa region and therefore highlighting education of children with visual impairment within these initiatives would yield speedy results. Members went through the criteria listed by the GTF to select the focus countries and applied those against the FTI countries in the region and short listed Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Malawi, Mozambique, and Uganda to be treated as the focus countries during the first phase of the EFA-VI campaign in Africa. The GTF opined that the list should be referred to the regional committee of Africa region for finalization. The GTF also felt that a regional coordinator needs to be appointed for the region to coordinate the EFA-VI activities and it was proposed to create the regional secretariat at the office of the Africa Union of the Blind (AFUB) in Nairobi. The regional coordinator is expected to be in place by March 2008 and therefore, the EFA-VI activities in the region are likely to expand to achieve the desired goals. The development in this regard will be posted on the ICEVI website regularly.

REGIONAL COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE AFRICA REGION

The Regional Committee meeting of the ICEVI Africa region will take place in Kampala, Uganda in December 2007 to draw a road map for implementation of national level activities under the EFA-VI global campaign. This meeting assumes special significance, as the region will also be deliberating on the job descriptions of the regional coordinator and monitoring and evaluation of the campaign activities in the vast region where communication and networking are a big challenge. The Global Task Force reiterated that the diversity of Africa should be addressed in formulating country specific strategies in human resource development, awareness creation, prioritizing implementation activities, prescribing context specific service delivery models, etc. The outcomes of the Africa region will be a true learning experience for the Global Task Force in planning the future phases of the campaign activities. The Global Task Force is looking for more involvement from parents, professionals, Disabled Peoples' Organisations, Governments and International Non-

Governmental Organisations in carrying forward the mission of EFA-VI and the regional committee of Africa will be making every attempt to tap the international and regional initiatives aimed at promotion of services for persons with disabilities in general and persons with visual impairment in particular in the region.

RESEARCH TASK FORCE MEETING OF THE GLOBAL CAMPAIGN

Documentation of empirical evidences is an integral part of the implementation of the EFA-VI campaign and therefore, ICEVI constituted a Research Task Force (RTF) consisting of Dr. Jill Keeffe (Chairperson), Dr. Steve McCall, Dr. Paul Lynch, and Dr. M.N.G. Mani to operationise the procedures for gathering data as the campaign is on the move. The research initiative in this regard will focus on the four major success parameters of the campaign, viz., increasing the enrolment of children with visual impairment in schools, reducing their rate of dropout, ensuring provision of appropriate support services for their education, and demonstrating comparable performance in schools. The Research Task Force has started preparing guidelines to document such data in the countries where the EFA-VI is underway and also preparing simple tools that will help the local implementers. The RTF is also exploring the possibilities of generating many need-based online surveys through the website of ICEVI in order to get periodical information from parents, policy makers, professionals, teachers, and other stakeholders regarding the ongoing strategies and mid-course correction of campaign activities. In addition to the EFA-VI related research, the RTF will also post research documents pertaining to educational campaigns and also the learning strategies applied with children with visual impairment on the website of ICEVI. Researchers interested to get involved with the research activity are requested to contact the Chairperson of the RTF Dr. Jill Keeffe, First Vice-President of ICEVI at the e-mail address jillek@unimelb.edu.au

TEACHER PREPARATION WORKSHOP IN THE AFRICA REGION

Considering the vital importance of human resource development in implementing the EFA-VI Global Campaign, the Africa region is attempting to bring representatives of major universities to Kampala, Uganda in December 2007 for a two-day workshop to discuss competency based curriculum to facilitate inclusion. The workshop is expected to finalise curriculum that is necessary for preparing competent special education teachers in the area of visual impairment and also suggest curriculum outline that should be incorporated into the general teacher preparation curriculum to sensitise general classroom teachers about education of children with disabilities. Though variations exist between teacher preparation institutions and also in terms of teacher expectations, the curriculum that is expected to emerge out of this workshop will focus on competencies irrespective of where the teacher works. The Africa region will also be organising master level workshops in the future to prepare teacher preparation institutions to adequately address the educational needs of children with

disabilities. The region has already initiated dialogue with the regional initiatives such as the TTISSA (Teacher Training Initiative in Sub-Saharan Africa) to create awareness among the general teaching community about the principles of inclusion and sensitizing the pre-service teachers about learning characteristics of children with disabilities. More information on this initiative will be reported in the publications of ICEVI.

NORTH AMERICA/CARIBBEAN AND PACIFIC REGION MEMBERSHIP

The strength of ICEVI is in its regions. Among the seven regions of ICEVI, until recently only our European region had a well planned and organized membership drive. However, since our 12th World Conference in Malaysia both our North America/Caribbean and Pacific regions have been doing an excellent job in pursuing individual and organizational memberships in ICEVI. In the Pacific region this is being done in close collaboration with the South Pacific Educators of the Visually Impaired (SPEVI) to facilitate joint ICEVI-SPEVI membership. Such regional initiatives make good sense and will build a stronger ICEVI. Kudos to Kathy Huebner, Chairperson, North America/Caribbean region and Frances Gentle, Chairperson, Pacific region for their initiatives.

POSSIBLE EXPANSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION PROJECTS

ICEVI in partnership with the Pertuni (Indonesian Union of the Blind) implemented a higher education project in Bandung and Jakarta, Indonesia during 2006-07 benefiting more than 100 visually impaired students in higher education institutions. The programme sponsored by the Nippon Foundation made effective use of technology to contribute to the independence as well as competence of persons with visual impairment. The final evaluation of the project jointly conducted by the Nippon Foundation, ICEVI and the Pertuni showed significant positive results. The Nippon Foundation has expressed interest in expanding the project to other locations in Indonesia and to Vietnam and the Philippines. ICEVI has submitted an application for this project and hopes to launch the activities in early 2008.

ICEVI – MARGA SCHULZE FOUNDATION COLLABORATION

The Marga-Schulze Foundation in Germany is supporting the cause of higher education of girls with visual impairment in Africa and Asia. The Foundation is proposing to expand the scheme to many countries in the Africa and Asia regions to help more girls with visual impairment to pursue higher education in order to become leaders in the future. Besides scholarship support, the Foundation is also supporting the capacity building activities for these students in the areas of communication skills, technology, orientation & mobility, Braille reading & writing, use of assistive devices, etc. Larry Campbell, President, ICEVI and Mani, Secretary General recently had a

discussion with the Founder of this Foundation Dr. Hans Eugen Schulze and assured the assistance of ICEVI network in expanding this programme to different countries in the Africa and Asia regions. ICEVI will disseminate this information to the regional committees and encourage them to come up with concrete proposals to provide scholarship to adult girls with visual impairment to pursue their higher education. As higher education is a vital continuum in the process of education for all, this potential collaboration with the Marga Schulze Foundation is likely to benefit many girls with visual impairment to realize the mission of higher education, which they cannot afford.

9TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON LOW VISION IN MONTREAL

The 9th International Conference on Low Vision will be held from July 7 to 11, 2008 in Montréal, Canada. The Institut Nazareth & Louis-Braille (a rehabilitation centre specialized in visual impairment) and the University of Montréal's School of Optometry will oversee the organization of this Conference in partnership with the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) under the auspices of the International Society for Low Vision Research and Rehabilitation (ISLRR).

The Organizing Committee is already at work to make this conference both informative and entertaining. The Conference will feature plenary and concurrent sessions during which distinguished academics, researchers, and practitioners will present the results of their work on vision science research, services of rehabilitation and psychosocial aspects of vision impairment. Log on to www.vision2008.ca for more details.

PARTICIPATION IN THE 14TH WORLD CONFERENCE OF Dbl

Larry Campbell, President, ICEVI recently delivered an address at the 14th World Conference of Deafblind International in Perth, Australia in September 2007. In his address, Larry talked about the EFA-VI Global Campaign and the challenges of assuring that children with deafblindness are included. A number of specific actions were suggested to assure that ICEVI and Dbl work together to achieve the objective of reaching all children.

THAILAND SCIENCE EDUCATION PROJECT

The Christian Foundation for the Blind in Thailand has initiated a new project that is aimed at improving science education for students with visual impairment from primary level onward. The project is interested in being in contact with individuals and organizations with particular interest in the area of science education. In particular the project would like to make connections with young visually impaired teachers with a strong background in the sciences who have English language fluency. For further

information contact: Monthian Buntan, Thailand Association of the Blind
m_buntan@yahoo.com

SAD DEMISE OF FRANCES W. WIESENFELD

Frances W. Wiesenfeld, transitioned from this Earthly plane Sunday morning September 30, 2007. From 1968 to approximately 1988, she served the world for Helen Keller International, and these were 20 of her very best and most enjoyable, fulfilling years in a life that spanned more than 90 years. She touched and uplifted so very many lives, and her spirit will live forever. We all join her family members in mourning her loss.

SELF-ESTEEM –THEME OF THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE EDUCATOR

The theme of the January 2008 issue of The Educator will be “Self Esteem”. Dr. Peter Rodney, one of the members of the Publication Committee will be the guest editor for this issue and Harry Svensson, the Second-Vice President will be the Editor. Those interested in making contributions may contact Harry at harry.svensson@sit.se or contact the ICEVI Secretariat at sgicevi@vsnl.net

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