

The Educator



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People with Visual Impairment**

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CONTENTS

1. Message from the President	02
2. Message from the Editor	03
3. "Inclusive Education: Leaving No One Behind" - ICEVI West Asia-Sense India International Conference - <i>Nandini Rawal</i>	04
4. Firsthand Experience in Inclusive Education: Challenges and Successes - <i>Lok Bahadur Gurung</i>	06
5. The Role of Legislation in Promotion of Education of Children with Disabilities - <i>Bhushan Punani</i>	18
6. Strategies To Approach Inclusive Education for Children with Visual Impairment - <i>Nandini Rawal</i>	25
7. My Journey - <i>Rashmi Maruvada</i>	33
8. Importance of Parents in Education of the VI/MDVI Child - <i>Pallavi Kadam</i>	35
9. Success Stories of our Advocacy Initiatives: The Long and Hard Roads.... - <i>Kinnari Desai</i>	39
10. Parents' Column - <i>Susan LaVenture</i>	44
11. Recommendations from the ICEVI West Asia -Sense India International Conference	45
12. Call For Papers – The Educator <i>Submission Guidelines</i>	47

Our International Partners





Message from The President & CEO



Dear ICEVI members, partners and colleagues

Much has happened in the world since early 2020. The public health shocks due to the COVID-19 pandemic have resulted in dramatic changes in social interaction and economic activity. In the area of education, governments have enforced restrictions to physical movement and school closures in an effort to limit the spread of the virus. The term “out-of-school children” has taken on a new meaning as education services are diminished or transformed for large populations of children around the globe.

The ability of education leaders to provide quality teaching and learning opportunities in out-of-school settings is strongly influenced by the human, physical and financial resource capacity and education infrastructure of the country. Provision of a quality online or distance education service for children with vision impairment requires, for example, the presence of an effective road and transport system for distributing teaching materials; a reliable electricity and internet service for teacher-student interaction and delivery of online teaching; and the availability of appropriate Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and assistive devices for access, completion and return of assigned work. The current pandemic has highlighted the importance of flexible, participatory, learner-centred teaching approaches that empower children with disabilities, including children with vision impairment, to become independent and capable learners.

In this issue, we focus on the first conference held in Nepal in February 2020 on the topic of inclusive education for children with vision impairment or deafblindness. Little did we know at the time of the conference that the issues discussed in relation to West Asia would become global issues. The conference brought together sighted and blind leaders, administrators, educators, parents and persons with vision impairment from Nepal, Bangladesh and India. The conference participants explored the mechanisms used by education leaders in low and middle-income countries in the West Asia region to transform their systems of education from segregated to inclusive, community-based systems for children with vision impairment. The conference papers presented in this issue offer valuable insights into how countries around the world can improve their provision of inclusive quality education, post COVID-19, for children who were previously marginalised due to disability.

We acknowledge the efforts of ICEVI members and partners in supporting the provision of education and health services for children and families whose lives have been severely affected by the pandemic. We look forward to sharing the new knowledge and insights gained from this unique period in history when we meet at the WBU-ICEVI General Assemblies in Madrid in May 2021. Until then, stay safe.

Frances Gentle
President

M.N.G. Mani
Chief Executive Officer

Message from The Editor



Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I hope this issue of The Educator finds you safe and well. We have all had quite the experience over the past few weeks!

We had prepared the January 2020 issue of The Educator to present items for consideration prior to the WBU-ICEVI General Assemblies in Madrid. As you know, the General Assemblies have been rescheduled for May 21-26, 2021. As the pandemic grew and the likelihood of rescheduling loomed larger, ICEVI held up the January 2020 issue. Now it will be published next year. The good news is that the January 2021 issue will be on time, since it is already prepared!

This current issue, put together hastily, contains papers from the ICEVI West Asia – Sense India International Conference held in Kathmandu, Nepal in February 2020. We were extremely fortunate that the conference organizer, Bhushan Punani (ICEVI West Asia President) and the Program Chair, Nandini Rawal (ICEVI Treasurer) contacted presenters and asked them to submit full papers from their presentation. Many did. There simply would not be an issue without the hard work of Dr. Punani and Ms. Rawal, and I want to acknowledge both of them for making this issue possible. They were wonderful to work with – very helpful in contacting authors, clarifying terms, and responding to questions – and I cannot thank them enough. Please let them both know how much they are appreciated!

I think you will find these papers interesting. The theme of the conference was Inclusive Education: Leaving No One Behind. Accordingly, the papers selected for this issue focus on inclusive education and children with multiple disabilities and visual impairment. Reading these papers made me wish I had been in Kathmandu for the conference – then they made me yearn for the time when we can be together again, sharing ideas, discussing strategies, and learning from each other.

Please note the call for papers included in this issue. Please submit your articles, papers, commentaries, and/or position statements on Braille by 1 June 2020 for the July issue of The Educator. The topic for the following issue is Online Education, particularly in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, and submissions are due 1 December 2020.

Be safe, stay well, and I pray that you and your loved ones are able to move past the pandemic in good health.

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“Inclusive Education: Leaving No One Behind”- ICEVI West Asia-Sense India International Conference

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Editor’s note: In this issue of The Educator we are pleased to publish select papers from the conference described below. Special thanks go to Mr. Bhushan Punani and Ms. Nandini Rawal, ICEVI colleagues and friends, who not only organized this conference but elicited paper contributions from some of the speakers.

The first ever ICEVI West Asia-Sense India International Conference was organized in a relatively cold Kathmandu, the land of the Himalayas, from 16-18 February, 2020. The three days of learning and exchange of ideas attracted more than 300 participants from 8 countries, which included Australia, Bangladesh, India, Kenya, Nepal, Poland, USA, and the UK.

The three day conference was designed to cover all the aspects related to the life cycle of persons with visual impairment and deafblindness. The first and third day had plenary sessions, and day two was dedicated to concurrent workshop sessions. Altogether, there were approximately 120 speakers who shared their varied experiences with the participants. There was an entertainment programme by blind singers from Nepal, who enthralled the audience by their range and melody. The conference was opened by

Mr. Ganesh Prasad Timilsina

Chairperson of the National Assembly (Upper House), Nepal

and the Guests of Honour were

Ms. Alison Marshal, Director, Sense International;

Mr. Mahesh Prasad Dahal, Secretary of Education, Government of Nepal; and

Dr. Frances Gentle, President, ICEVI.

Other officials in attendance were

Dr. M.N.G. Mani, CEO, ICEVI;

Ms. Nandini Rawal, Treasurer, ICEVI and Head of the Programme Committee;

Dr. Bhushan Punani, Chairperson, ICEVI West Asia;

Mr. Madhav Prasad Aryal, Country Representative, ICEVI Nepal;

Mr. A.K. Mittal, Secretary General, World Blind Union;

Mr. Akhil Paul, Director and Board Member – Dbl Sense India;

Mr. Mitralal Sharma, President, NFDN, Nepal; and

Mr. Birendra Raj Pokharel, ICEVI Nepal & Executive Secretary, Action on Disability Rights and Development (ADRAD).

The conference was organized by Blind People’s Association (India) with Action on Disability Rights and Development (ADRAD-Nepal) as the local partner. The venue was the Nepal Administrative Staff College (NASC), Jawalakhel, Lalitpur.

The Theme of the Conference was **“Inclusive Education: Leaving No One Behind”** and the Sub Themes were **Early Intervention and Child Preparatory Practices; Inclusive Practices and School Age; Inclusion and Children with Severe Disabilities; Policies and Legislations in Asia and Inclusive Practices; Skill Training and Inclusive Practices; Technology and Its Use to Enhance Inclusion; Access – Physical, Communication, Attitudinal, Social and Emotional; Governance and Resource Mobilization**. This Conference was recognized by the Rehabilitation Council of India for 150 participants (Indian Participants) under Continuing Rehabilitation, Education (CRE). The participants enjoyed the conference and paid their obeisance to the Pashupatinath Temple and visited all the historical sites of Kathmandu.

The Jagdish Patel-Sense Award for outstanding services in the field of visual impairment and deafblindness was conferred on Mrs. Vidya Devi Vaidya, a teacher of students with visual impairment for 4 decades, and Mr. Pushparaj Rimal, a person with deafblindness. Both awardees are from Nepal.



Firsthand Experience in Inclusive Education: Challenges and Successes

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INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is globally accepted as a movement of educational reform in order to establish a universally accessible and quality education system that addresses the problems of exclusion in education. Along with the global community, the Government of Nepal has also committed to ensure universal quality education and adopted principles of inclusion in education to promote the overall education system. Despite the various provisions of inclusive education at the policy level, many children in Nepal still remain out of school (the number of marginalized group is very high). The practice of inclusive education is affected by multiple factors such as lack of effective teachers, less inclusive culture in the school, weak coordination between community and school, and limited financial resources of the schools. The Government of Nepal has ratified many international and regional conventions regarding education including the Salamanca Declaration (1994) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD, 2006) recognizing the right to inclusive education for all persons with disabilities. The Government has adopted different legal and policy instruments to address the current issues and problems regarding

access, participation, and opportunities to education. Unfortunately, too often, national inclusive education policy is aspiring, vague, and non-committal.

The educational needs of a child with deaf-blindness are unique. If this unique learning style is not addressed, the child with deaf-blindness is at risk for being excluded from the classroom, the family and the community. The same is true for other students with special needs.

MEANING/DEFINITION OF INCLUSION

Inclusion is the social practice where marginalized and deprived children who are often excluded from the society or local community can have full and equal participation and contribute to the life of their community and culture.

Concept of Inclusive Education

Disability movements, educational reform movements, and several other United Nations conventions have made significant contributions in the development of inclusive education. In the field of education, inclusion came to international practice with the UNESCO Salamanca Statement and has become a global movement. Recently, inclusion in education is recognized as a basic human right and the

foundation for a more just and equal society.

Inclusive Education

Inclusive Education (IE) is defined as a process of addressing the diverse needs of all learners by reducing barriers to and within the learning environment. It means attending the age appropriate class of the child's local school, with individually tailored support. An education system that accepts all children equally and provides them with the best quality education possible is inclusive education.

THE PRACTICE OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN NEPAL

Nepal at a Glance

Nepal is a small, landlocked and mountainous country located between India and China. With a population of 28.8 million (27 Nov 2019) spread over 147,181 square kilometers, it is one of the most impoverished developing countries within South Asia. Nepal is divided into the three primary regions: the Terai, Hill, and Mountain areas. These regions are further divided into seven provinces and 77 districts for planning and administrative purposes.

With the political change, Nepal has transformed to a federal system and is seeking a new education system that supports mainstreaming excluded groups, fosters social cohesion of a plural society, and promotes the right of education through the principles of inclusion relevant

to federalism. As Nepal is a multi-lingual, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious country, an inclusive education system in Nepal is necessary not only to increase the access to education, but also to build the foundation of an inclusive society.

The Department of Education defines inclusive education as the developmental process of an education system that provides the right for all children to have useful education in a non-discriminatory environment of their own community by upholding multicultural differences of the country. The following are identified as the target groups of Nepal's inclusive education policies:

- Girls;
- Janajati children (ethnic and linguistic groups);
- Children with disability;
- Street children;
- Child laborers;
- Children affected by conflict and trafficking;
- Orphans, children living in poverty;
- Children with HIV/AIDS and leprosy;
- Kamaiya or bonded labour children;
- Children studying in Madrasa Gumba or monasteries;
- Children from language-group minorities and refugee children;
- Children forced to live in jail;
- Dalit Children; and
- Kumari girls/Deuki girls (living goddesses).

Policies and Legislation on Inclusive Education in Nepal

It is important that national policy and guidance encourage and enable inclusive education practices. Inclusive education policy needs to clearly articulate the values of inclusive education.

The Government of Nepal has ratified many international and regional conventions regarding education, including the Salamanca Declaration (1994) and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006) recognizing the right to inclusive education for all persons with disabilities. Special Education in Nepal began in the 1960s and has encompassed the following statutes and policies:

- a. Education Act (1971), article 6 A
- b. Protection and Welfare of Disabled Persons' Act (1982), article 6
- c. The Basic and Primary Education Plan (BPEP) (1991-2001)
- d. Child Act (1992), article 4
- e. Special Education Policy (1996)
- f. Education Rule (2002), chapter 11
- g. National Policy and Plan of Action on Disability (2006)
- h. School Sectors Reform Plan (SSRP) (2009-2015)
- i. Consolidate Equity Strategy (2014)
- j. Constitution of Nepal (2015), articles 31 and 39
- k. Inclusive Education Policy for Children with Disability (2015)

The Nepal government adopted the Disability Rights Act and an Inclusive Education Policy for Persons with Disabilities in 2017. The policy says that children should be able to study, without discrimination, in their own communities, but also allows educating for children with disabilities separately. The government has committed at the policy level to promote inclusion and equity in education. The government is developing an inclusive education master plan to create disability-friendly educational infrastructure and facilities, improve teacher training, and develop a flexible curriculum by 2030.

Unfortunately, too often national inclusive education policy is aspiring and vague. Many policymakers do not understand or believe in inclusive education and can stonewall efforts to make school policies more inclusive.

Table 1**Types and number of people with disability in Nepal Source: CBS, 2014**

S.No.	Types of Disability	Male	Female	Total	Proportion of All Disability
1	Physical	186,457	108,279	294,736	0.574
2	Blind	47,041	47,724	94,765	0.185
3	Deaf	41,204	38,103	79,307	0.155
4	Deaf-Blind	4,803	4,633	9,436	0.018
5	Speech	33,190	25,665	58,855	0.115
6	Mental	16,787	14,210	30,997	0.060
7	Intellectual	8,280	6,608	14,888	0.029
8	Multiple	20,502	18,114	38,616	0.075
Total		280,086	233,235	513,321	

Table 2**Students with Disability in School Education in 2017**

S.No.	Disability Category	Number
1	Physical (affecting mobility)	25,499
2	Intellectual Disability	16,514
3	Hearing impaired	10,916
4	Visually Impaired	1,152
5	Low Vision	8,056
6	Hearing and Visually impaired (Deafblind)?	1,460
7	Vocal and speech related disabilities	11,755
Total		75,352

This number (75,352) is only 1.01 percent of the total number of students in schools for grade 1-12.

Table 3**Types and number of schools for students with special needs/children with disability**

S.No.	Types of Schools	Number
1	Mainstream Community Schools	29,035
2	Integrated schools (5 for deaf, 16 for blind, 2 for physically disabled)	23
3	Special schools (18 for deaf, 1 for blind, 14 for Intellectual Disability)	33
4	Schools with resource classes	380

Challenges for Inclusive Education

A fully inclusive classroom has students across the educational and developmental spectrum, ranging from typically developing students to severe and profoundly disabled students. For this reason, it becomes a challenge for the teacher to find enough of a balance to serve all the students.

Although many schools are moving towards special needs inclusive classrooms, there are a number of issues or challenges that need to be addressed. The most commonly identified challenges to successful inclusive education implementation are:

- Lack of experience in an inclusion setting
- Lack of experience dealing with severe and profound disabilities
- Shortage of teacher aides
- Lack of Commitment on the part of government
- Lack of Financial and human resources
- Lack of physical facilities
- Lack of theoretical curricula and instructional materials
- Absence of early intervention
- Lack of scientific survey of disabled persons
- Educational facilities confined to the special need students
- Individualized lesson plans
- Negative attitudes of teachers and community, non-disabled peers and their parents

- Parents' poor economic condition
- Large class sizes

Barriers to Inclusive Education

Inclusive classrooms encourage open and frank dialogue about differences as well as a respect for those with different abilities, cultural backgrounds, and needs. Even gifted and accelerated learners benefit from an inclusive environment. Despite the benefits, there are still many barriers to the implementation of inclusive education.

Attitudes: Old attitudes die hard, and many still resist the accommodation of students with disabilities and learning issues. Many social and cultural prejudices against those with differences can lead to discrimination, which inhibits the educational process.

Physical Barriers: Environmental barriers can include doors, passageways, stairs and ramps, and recreational areas.

Curriculum: A rigid and stereotyped curriculum that does not allow for experimentation or the use of different teaching methods both can be an enormous barrier to inclusion.

Teachers: Teachers who are not trained or who are unwilling or unenthusiastic about working with disabled students are a drawback to successful inclusion.

Language and communication: Being taught in a new and in some cases unfamiliar language is obviously a significant barrier to successful learning.

Too often, these students face discrimination and low expectations.

Socio-economic factors: Violence, poor health services, and other social factors create barriers to inclusion.

Policies as barriers: Many policymakers don't understand or believe in inclusive education, and can stonewall efforts to make school policies more inclusive.

Despite several new policies to promote disability rights, including for access to education, many children with disabilities in Nepal are not getting a quality, inclusive education. They are segregated in special schools.

SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

One of the primary misunderstandings of inclusive education is a belief in the resource-intensity (costs of resources such as specialized teachers and equipment). However, inclusive education is actually cost-effective. Ultimately, successful implementation of inclusive education occurs at the school and classroom level. The first step in inclusive education implementation is to help schools understand their own challenges, assets, and resources. It is important for teachers to have the knowledge and skills to create inclusive classrooms, as well as for school leadership to provide an inclusive and innovative environment for teachers to flourish. More sustainable inclusive

education implementation would put more emphasis on inclusive pedagogy in pre-service teacher training for all teacher trainees, as well as sustained and continuous in-service development.

Some Strategies to Make Inclusive Education Effective

- Ensure child friendly environment in school
- Develop disability friendly physical infrastructure in the schools
- Provide in-service training on inclusive education to every teacher
- Ensure teaching by mother language till basic education is completed
- Implement free and compulsory school education
- Recruit specialists such as therapists and language interpreters in the school
- Change the students' performance evaluation system
- Provide additional support to children with disabilities in school
- Increase the educational budget of the school
- Promote the economic status of the parents

SOME CASE STUDIES ON CHALLENGES FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

(Firsthand Experiences I Have Had)

A 15-year-old girl who is in a resource classroom for deaf students says:

"I study in grade 5. I have never been to a regular class. I want to learn together with others. I would get a chance to teach sign language to other kids in the

regular class and I can communicate with them. It is more fun learning together with others rather than to remain segregated."

A student who has cerebral palsy and uses a wheelchair, attended a neighborhood school near his home in the early grades. However, at the end of fifth grade, the teachers encouraged his parents to place him in another school because sixth grade and other upper grades were on upper floors and that is inaccessible for wheelchair users. He had to abandon the school.

An 18-year-old deaf student in a mainstream classroom describes her experience:

"Sometimes it is difficult to understand lessons that are taught in the class. I ask my sign language teacher when I do not understand. The teacher tries to explain, but I do not understand the words. The lack of vocabulary, as well as the absence of visual materials, makes it difficult for me to get through the teacher."

A 17-year-old blind girl in a mainstream classroom describes her experience:

"I am not able to see and follow what is written on the blackboard. I depend on my peers to understand what is written on the blackboard. Not many Braille books are available. I have a tablet. I have heard about softwares that converts and edits scanned files in

accessible format. I need training how to use such devices to enhance my study."

A deafblind student in a school for the deaf expresses her experience:

"I am deafblind. I use hearing aids and wear glasses. Since I am in a school for the deaf, I have learned to use Nepali sign language for my communication. I can't follow the speed of the signs when the teacher signs fast. The contrast of the teacher's hands and the cloth is not good for me, which makes it difficult to follow her. Even the glaring light from the door/window discomforts me when the teacher stands near the door. Though I sit in the first row, I can't see the letters written on the white board."

Some schools have a resource classroom for children with intellectual disabilities and cannot accommodate children with hearing and visual disabilities. Similarly, some schools have a resource class for children who are blind or have low vision, but cannot enroll students with intellectual or hearing disabilities in the same school because the schools do not have the necessary accessible learning materials, sign language interpreters, or trained teachers. Some older children remain in resource classrooms for their entire basic education. When their children did not move to the older grades in mainstream schools, the parents are compelled to place their children in other segregated environments or take their children out of school altogether.

Children who are blind or have low vision learn Braille in resource classes, but a limited number of textbooks are available in Braille and very few materials are available in audio or digital formats.

The accommodations provided for students with disabilities during exams – such as a writing assistant for students with visual disabilities – are often ineffective. The assistant is often from a lower grade. There are no options for children with visual disabilities to take math and science tests in an accessible format. Such lack of reasonable accommodations can place serious burdens on the students for inclusion.

The deafblind students are either from the deaf community or from the blind community by origin. For those who come from the deaf community, sign language is the primary mode of communication. These children are admitted to the school for the deaf. For those who come from the blind community, Braille is the medium of reading and writing. These students are admitted to schools for the blind. So deafblind students are not benefitting from the existing educational settings in either case.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DEAFBLINDNESS

Definition of Deafblindness

“Deafblindness is described as a unique and isolating sensory disability resulting from the combination of both hearing and vision loss or impairment. This has a significant effect

on communication, socialization, mobility and daily living.” Deafblindness can be defined as a disability of access - access to visual and auditory information about people and things in the environment.

Impact of Deafblindness

- A child with vision loss must rely upon hearing to compensate
- A child with hearing loss must rely upon vision to compensate.
- For children with both vision and hearing loss, neither sense can adequately compensate for the lack of the other.
- Bits of pieces of information may be available, but will be incomplete, distorted, and unreliable.
- Depending on the remaining senses, the student may connect with the environment through the sense of touch, the sense of smell, movement, and/or with residual vision and or hearing.

Characteristics of Deafblind Children and Youths

- Simultaneous presence of defective vision and hearing impairment, which may vary in degrees.
- Does not imply total loss of either vision or hearing.
- Communication is most severely affected.
- Highly individualized training is needed to cope with the condition.
- Associated medical conditions and lags in developmental processes often occur.

- Lack of awareness of his/her own body.
- Lack of movement.
- Limited contact with immediate environment (the world is usually limited to within the arm's reach).
- Dependent on prompts.
- Lack of curiosity.
- Defensive.
- Engaged in self-stimulatory behaviors.
- Unusual posture and gait (positions himself/herself in unusual positions).
- Leads to feelings of isolation.
- Experiences low self-esteem.
- Lacks confidence to move about independently and to carry out daily tasks.
- Experiences and understanding of the world around them will be different depending on whether the person was born deafblind or acquired vision and hearing loss through deterioration of these senses later in life.

Types of Deafblindness Based on the Severity of Blindness and Deafness

- Blind and profoundly deaf. or
- Blind and severely or partially hearing impaired, or
- Partially sighted and profoundly deaf, or
- Partially sighted and severely or partially hearing impaired.

Types of Deafblindness According to Age of Onset of Vision and Hearing Loss

Congenital Deafblindness

- People born Deafblind.
- The term congenital deafblindness is also used when someone is not born deafblind, but becomes so, early in their development, before they have learned to communicate with speech, sign language or another forms of communication and mastered a language system for communication purposes.

Acquired Deafblindness

Acquired deafblindness is the a condition that happens after birth or at later stage in their life. This is the situation that takes place after the children have learned or mastered a language system for communication purposes.

Types of Acquired Deafblindness. There are three types of acquired deafblindness:

1. A person who is born deaf or hard of hearing and later his/her vision starts to deteriorate.
2. A person who is born blind or vision impaired and later his/her hearing starts to deteriorate
3. A person who is born with vision and hearing and later both senses start to deteriorate (not necessarily at the same time) through accident, injury or disease; for significant numbers of people the

ageing process is a cause of dual sensory loss or deafblindness.

Age of onset of sensory impairments, amount of auditory and visual impairments, mode of communication, cognition, and existence of additional disabilities are major factors in determining the appropriate educational settings for a deafblind child.

Communication and language instruction is the cornerstone of educational programming for children who are deafblind. Deafblindness severely limits access to models of communication and language. Many children who are congenitally deafblind struggle to develop symbolic communication. Children and adults who are congenitally deafblind with additional disabilities often communicate in highly idiosyncratic (particular) ways, including communicating through challenging behaviors.

Typically, communication for deafblind children is tactile in nature using signals, objects, gestures, and later on sign language or tactile symbols or some combination of forms. Language is developed through the use of routines, such as calendar systems. The child with deaf-blindness may first need to be moved co-actively through an activity to know what is expected of him. Then this support would be faded to avoid building prompt dependence after he understands what will be the consequence.

Communication preferences for people who are deafblind may involve the use of a

combination of methods that have been adapted, depending on:

- Whether the individual is congenitally deafblind or they have acquired dual sensory loss;
- The extent to which the person's vision and/or hearing is affected; and
- Acquisition of language.

Some of the Communication Methods That May Be Used by People with Deafblindness

- Speech
- Lip reading
- Sign language
- Tactile Signing
- Tracking
- Manual alphabet
- Printing on palm
- Tadoma
- Social Haptics
- Gestures
- Body language
- Behaviour/Routines
- Pictures/photos
- Object symbols
- Written (large print writing or typed information)
- Braille
- Finger Braille

Teaching Strategies and Content Modifications for the Child with Deaf-Blindness

Children with deaf-blindness have unique educational needs. A deafblind child cannot

learn from what he sees, like the deaf child does. He cannot learn from listening like the blind child does. He learns only by what he does. The educational and functional impact of these combined losses on each student will vary depending upon the degree and type of vision and hearing losses, the stability of the losses, the age of onset of each loss, the presence or absence of additional disabilities, and the quality of educational services provided.

Encountering the world without benefit of vision and hearing requires a great deal of trust. Bonding with the child is critical for the instructor, therefore it is important to evaluate the child's response to an individual when determining who will be the primary provider of instruction. Cause and effect are elusive. This child will not learn about objects or actions incidentally. He cannot tie together the fragmented input he receives without interpretation and instruction.

The educational needs of a child with deafblindness are unique. This unique learning style must be addressed to reduce the risk of being excluded from the classroom, the family and the community.

As concepts develop so slowly for this child, there should be a focus on making learning functional and developing clear goals, with many opportunities to practice those skills before he or she is able to generalize that concept to other situations.

Principles of Educational Programming for Deafblind Children

- Early identification of sensory deficits is essential to provide optimal opportunities for individuals with deafblindness.
- Communication is the corner stone of an educational plan for a student who has deafblindness.
- Educational placements should be selected on the basis of individual abilities and needs.
- Age of onset of sensory impairments, amount of auditory and visual impairments, mode of communication, cognition, and existence of additional disabilities are major factors in determining the appropriate educational setting.
- Teachers with specific training are necessary to provide optimal integrated programming for students with dual sensory impairments.
- There is a variety of appropriate educational alternatives for children and youth with deafblindness.
- A functional program must include opportunities to develop communication; social, recreational, and leisure skills; self-help; domestic skills; orientation; and independence within all environments based on real life situations.
- Integration of appropriate and related support services is necessary for a

successful educational program for a student with deafblindness.

CONCLUSION

Deafblind students are either from the deaf community or from the blind community by origin. For those who come from the deaf community, sign language is their primary mode of communication. These children are admitted to the school for the deaf. For those who come from the blind community, Braille is the medium of reading and writing. These students are admitted to schools for

the blind. Thus, deafblind students are not benefitting from the existing educational settings.

The educational needs of a child with deafblindness are unique. If this unique learning style is not addressed, the child with deafblindness is at risk for being excluded from the classroom, the family and the community. The same is true for other students with special needs.

Implementation must catch up to policy.

Message from the ICEVI COVID Response Team

Dear All,

In response to the COVID 19 crisis, the ICEVI is committed to share information that may be useful for parents and teachers of visually impaired children. The Regional Presidents of ICEVI are in touch with the country contacts of ICEVI and will gather country specific information too that will be uploaded on a dedicated section on our website www.icevi.org. We encourage members of ICEVI to share with us any learning resources that may be useful for partners and teachers to facilitate online learning opportunities for visually impaired children. ICEVI has also developed teacher training curricula and 175 mathematics instructional videos that may be helpful especially at this critical period. ICEVI will continue to update this page from time to time for the benefit of the viewers.

ICEVI COVID Response Team

The Role of Legislation in Promotion of Education of Children with Disabilities

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Preamble:

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) desired provision of compulsory and quality education to all children including children with disabilities. While there have been many declarations, conventions and strategies on achieving this goal in a time bound manner, most developing countries have not achieved this target. These countries are nowhere close to achieving the target of “Education for all Children (including those with visual impairment).” This paper discusses how legislation is only the beginning of the process of inclusive education and gives examples of other provisions that have been successful in exemplar countries.

A New Rights-Based Law in Nepal

On August 6, 2017 the Nepali parliament endorsed the Disability Rights Bill, adopting a human rights-based approach to disability. The new law will replace Disabled Protection and Welfare Act of 1982, which was enacted 35 years ago.

The Act was formulated under the leadership of the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, in close

collaboration with the National Federation of the Disabled Nepal, through a long process of consultations with DPOs, disability related services providers, other disability rights organizations and relevant government agencies, according to the National Federation of the Disabled – Nepal (NFDN), a national umbrella body of persons with disabilities.

Major provisions: The new legislation is divided into 13 chapters.

- I: Preliminary
- II: Classification of disability, identity card and documentation
- III: Rights of persons with disabilities
- IV: Additional rights to women and children with disabilities
- V: Access to education
- VI: Skills development and employment
- VII: Health, rehabilitation, and social safety
- VIII: Facilities
- IX: Directive Committee and District Coordination Committee
- X: Duties of various stakeholders
- XI: Protection of rights and implementation of duties
- XII: Crimes and punishment
- XIII: Miscellaneous

Key Features of the Nepalese Law: The access of persons with disabilities to basic services, human rights, opportunities including health, education and employment, are expected to increase in an equal basis significantly with the effective implementation of the Act. The new Act has included some of the pertaining issues such as mental health and developmental disabilities, which were neglected in the past.

The new law incorporates some crucial features to safeguard the rights of persons with disabilities, including the following features.

1. It is guided by a rights-based approach.
2. It is formulated in line with the UNCRPD and the disability related provisions incorporated in the constitution of Nepal.
3. The classification of disability has been amended.
4. It prohibits all kinds of discrimination on the basis of disability, with the provision of actions and punishment against it.
5. It provides equal access to education, health, employment, public physical infrastructure, transportation, and information and communication services.
6. It is developed in accordance to the federation system.

Policy Departure: The new law is more progressive and in line with international instruments made for persons of disabilities. Apart from broadening the scope of disability and clarifying the definition, the new legislation has ensured political, social and economic rights of persons with disabilities. Thus, the new Act should be considered as a major departure, from a welfare-based to a rights-based approach.

Way Forward: Emphasis on

Implementation: If implemented effectively, the new Act provides an opportunity for persons with disabilities to lead a life of dignity. It has also envisaged more rights and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. The endorsement of a progressive law, however, is not an end of all problems. Sincere efforts from concerned stakeholders, including the government, civil society, disabled persons' organizations (DPOs), and others is required to materialize the provisions included in the new Act.

EDUCATION - A CONSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY¹

The announcement of the 2015 Nepalese Constitution was a significant step, as it promulgated that there shall be no discrimination in the application of general laws on the grounds of religion, race, origin, caste, tribe, gender, sexual orientation, physical conditions, health conditions, physical impairment/conditions, and

¹A Report on Disability in Nepal. Available from : https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303756141_A_Report_on_Disability_in_Nepal [accessed May 3, 2020].

matrimonial status, pregnancy, economic condition, and language or geographical region. With respect to education, the Nepalese constitution outlined the following:

1. The physically impaired and economically poor shall have the right to free higher education, as provided for in law;
2. The visually impaired shall have the right to free education with the assistance of braille script;
3. Those with hearing and speech impairments shall have the right to free education with the use of sign language; and
4. Children who are helpless, orphaned, physically impaired, victims of conflict and/or vulnerable, shall have the right to special protection and facilities from the state.

The basic structure of the Constitution of Nepal ensures social, economic and political justice as well as equality of status and of opportunity to all citizens of Nepal. It is thus the constitutional obligation of the State to ensure equal justice, equity, and equality to all citizens including persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups of people. Thus the Constitution of Nepal has duly recognized the provision of education to all children, including those with disabilities.

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION – A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT

While the government of Nepal has endorsed inclusive education in policy, the translation of this policy to practice remains to be seen. There is urgent need to strengthen physical infrastructure and promote proper coordination between bodies that regulate – officially and unofficially – the education system in Nepal including: school supervisors, District Education Offices, Teachers, School Management Committee (SMC) members, International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGO) and local NGOs, local clubs, Village Development Committees (VDC), and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) members (CERID, 2008). The youth in Nepal have a great role to play in ensuring promotion of such coordination².

EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES – A LEGISLATIVE MANDATE

An analysis of Nepal's disability policies, acts, and regulations indicates that there are nine main areas that the government has granted facilities and rights for the disabled:

1. **Identity cards:** Disabled persons are issued with identity cards, which are categorized according to the nature of disability (red, blue, yellow and white). Cards can be obtained from the district office.

²A Report on Disability in Nepal. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303756141_A_Report_on_Disability_in_Nepal [accessed May 3, 2020].

2. **Free education:** Educational institutions are prohibited from charging fees to disabled students. Certain educational allowances are also made, such as permitting the use of an assistant during examinations for students with visual impairments.
3. **Scholarships:** The Government is determined to ensure that a variety of scholarships are available for disabled children, including vocational and technical training. The Government provides scholarships according to the type and severity of an individual's disabilities, with 2% reserved for disabled students completing higher education.
4. **Medical care:** Free medical examination facilities in hospitals for the disabled, and free medical treatment for disabled people above the age of 65.
5. **Workforce:** The government of Nepal has reserved 5% of all jobs in the civil service industry for disabled persons.
6. **Transportation:** Disabled persons receive a 50% discount for public transportation costs. Additionally, seats are reserved for disabled persons when the transportation vehicle has a capacity of 15 or more.
7. **Accessibility:** Every public building and places (for example, hospitals, schools, campuses, buses, etc.) should be differently-able friendly
8. **Income tax and customs:** An income tax exemption applies for disabled persons in Nepal. The Government has also held that there should be custom-free means of transportation for disabled persons, including four-wheel scooters.
9. **Social welfare and shelter:** NPR. 1000 per month as social welfare allowances for those with complete disabilities with nature-dependent allowances for other disabilities. The government has also put into place provisions to ensure that the disabled, including mentally impaired children, are able to access shelter.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE UNCRPD³:

As Nepal has ratified the UNCRPD, its provisions have the veracity and validity of law, and Nepal is bound by all the provisions of the same. Article 24(2)(a) mandates that persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system; Article 24(2)(b) mandates that persons with disabilities can access inclusive, quality, and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis; other sub-articles talk of reasonable accommodation, provision of support, to learn social and life skills. The United Nations had adopted the SDGs with the principal objective to ensure

³United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, available at : <http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.html>

that all people obtain peace and prosperity by 2030. SDG 4 is designed to achieve inclusive and quality education for all and to promote lifelong learning.

Programmatic Entitlement: Nepal has taken steps towards adopting inclusive and integrated categories of schooling in its strategy towards inclusive education. The Nepalese Department of Education defines inclusive education as the developmental process of an education system that provides the right for all children to have useful education in a non-discriminatory environment of their own community by upholding multicultural differences of the country. The Department of Education has identified multiple target groups included in its inclusive education policies: girls, Janajati children (ethnic and linguistic groups), disabled children, street children, child laborers, children affected by conflict and trafficking, orphans, children living in poverty, children with HIV/AIDS and Leprosy, Kamaiya or bonded labour children, children studying in Madrasa Gumba or monasteries, and children from language-group minorities and refugee children.

A research study by Narayan Prasad Regmi⁴ found that in theory inclusive education in Nepal is grounded in the human rights perspective. Although the Government has made different provisions for inclusive education at the policy level, the practice of inclusive pedagogy in classrooms was found

less effective. The practice of inclusive education is affected by multiple factors, such as lack of effective teachers, less inclusive culture in the schools, weak coordination between community and school, and limited financial resources of the schools. Among the factors that were found responsible for less effective inclusive practices was the negative attitude of teachers and parents towards disability and a lack of respect for disability and diversity. Similarly, other social factors such as social values and the belief system, resource constraints, lack of knowledge about children with disabilities, and social isolation – where children with disabilities are often ignored by teachers, peers, and other school staff – were equally responsible for the study's conclusion that there is an implementation gap between inclusive education policy and its actual practice in Nepal.

INDIA: AN EXEMPLAR

India has implemented several initiatives, which might be helpful for Nepal and other countries working to implement the UNCRPD, SDG4, and new legislation.

1. Right to Education Act (2009), which ensures free and compulsory education to all including children with disabilities.
2. Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016), a comprehensive rights- based law based on principles of the UNCRPD,

⁴https://edoc.ub.uni-muenchen.de/20510/7/Regmi_Narayan_P.pdf

which ensures complete inclusion of persons with disabilities, protection of their rights, and promotion of needs-based services for them.

3. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, a national level program that provides inclusive education at the primary level of education to 2.7 million children with disabilities.
4. Rashtriya Madhyamic Shiksha Abhiyan, which ensures education support including services of Special Educators to all children with disabilities at the secondary level of education.
5. Reserving 5% of Higher Education enrollment in all type of courses for persons with disabilities, in the institutions run or supported by the Government.
6. ADIP Scheme, which provides free of cost assistive devices, including rehabilitation and educational devices.
7. A variety of initiatives at the University level for facilitating education of person with disabilities.
8. Establishment of 18 computerized Braille presses across the country for providing free-of-cost Braille books to students.
9. Reserving 4% of jobs at all levels of employment in the Government sector for persons with disabilities.
10. Concessions in travel, services of writers in the exam, extra time in examination and such other accommodations that

eliminate barriers for persons with disabilities in education and rehabilitation.

Role of Young People: Youths with visual impairment have a great role to play in promoting services for children with visual impairment. And India has made its youths a critical part of its overall inclusion strategy. Youths with visual impairment can:

- Understand existing policies, legislation, programs, facilities, and concessions for persons with visual impairment.
- Create awareness about these provisions and enable persons to avail themselves of these benefits.
- Promote and initiate advocacy measures for effective implementation of these initiatives.
- Become role models by attaining success in availing all these benefits and emerging as leaders.
- Take the initiative at community and school level to make education inclusive, identify children with visual impairment, motivate and enable parents to get their children enrolled and take measures to implement all the programs effectively.
- Advocate at local, district, provincial, and national level to see that all these measures are implemented effectively.
- Associate with organizations, parents groups and Disabled People's Organization to promote such measures further.

- Identify other role models and promote their success stories
- Use local media for creating awareness about these provisions and benefits.
- Organize motivational programs, extend a helping hand to students studying at various level of education, and assist them to complete all formalities for availing all the concessions and entitlements

CONCLUSION

As the dictum goes, “Law prevails over expert opinions, research findings and personal views on the subject.” Thus it is mandatory for Nepal to ensure appropriate education of children with disabilities at the elementary as well as the secondary level of education. As India has enacted appropriate

measures and adopted policies on imparting free and compulsory education to all children including children with disabilities at all four levels – constitution, legislation, policies, and schemes – now it is time to prevail upon the all Governments to ensure that each and every child with a disability is ensured free and appropriate education, in each and every mode of education, at all levels of education, and with complete provision of educational devices, professional services, and equal opportunities.

Let their education not be merely an academic discussion; we must respect children's rights to education and ensure their access to appropriate, quality, and effective education.

Mission of ICEVI

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

Goals

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

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

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

Strategies To Approach Inclusive Education for Children with Visual Impairment

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INCLUSION : The term that we have been passionately advocating for the past many years,

INCLUSION : The ultimate goal of any rehabilitation plan for persons with visual impairment

INCLUSION : The word that fills us some of us with dread, confusion, and doubts about its efficacy and success.

But in our hearts, we know, though it is difficult to attain it is not impossible. Moreover, it is inevitable.

In our different countries, we are at various different stages of the evolution process of inclusive education. Some of us are working in special schools exclusively, some in special schools that run integrated education programmes, while some of us are working with integrated programmes of the Government while others are in inclusive education settings!

There still remains a great deal of confusion between inclusive education and integrated education. Sometimes this can just be a matter of language, but in practice, integrated education tends to still assume that the child is the problem, and tries to "integrate" them into the mainstream school, by drawing on the goodwill of a class teacher, by preparing the child, and by persuading people to accept the child as an

act of kindness. If the integration fails, the explanations again focus on the child as the problem; for example: "they were not ready", "they got teased by other children, or they are not our children."

The major difference in the two systems needs to be brought out. In integrated education, specialist teachers provide most of the essential as well as support services, whereas general classroom teachers provide additional assistance to blind children in the classroom. In inclusive settings, the education of disabled children is treated as an integral part of general education; therefore, essential services are provided by general classroom teachers and only support services are provided by specialist teachers if and when necessary.

What Then is Inclusive Education?

The underlying values of an educational system are the ABCs (ACCEPTANCE, BELONGING, AND COMMUNITY) AND the

4Rs (READING, WRITING, ARITHMETIC, AND RELATIONSHIPS). Children with disabilities are as much in need of such values as non-disabled children.

- It acknowledges that ALL CHILDREN CAN LEARN. It is about enabling the education system to respond to diversity.
- Inclusive Education (IE) is ABOUT REMOVING THE BARRIERS THAT EXCLUDE PEOPLE FROM THE EDUCATION SYSTEM. An inclusive education system ensures that all children in a given community, whatever their learning needs, speeds, age, gender, ethnic background, or economic status, can be fully included in the mainstream system. This involves making some changes to the whole system and structures of education to enable this to happen.
- An inclusive education system locates THE PROBLEM NOT WITH THE CHILD, but supports and enables the system, the curricula, the methodologies, to be flexible and focus on all children's learning needs.
- AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SYSTEM ADOPTS THE "SOCIAL MODEL" OF DISABILITY – that society and the environment around the person disables that person or child, rather than the "medical model" of disability, which locates the problem with the individual person and his or her individual imperfections.

- It is a dynamic process, based on principles that need to be implemented practically according to the local context and situation.
- It is a strategic approach designed to facilitate learning success for all children. IT ADDRESSES THE COMMON GOALS OF DECREASING AND OVERCOMING ALL EXCLUSION FROM THE HUMAN RIGHT TO EDUCATION, at least at the elementary level, and enhancing access, participation and learning success in quality basic education for all.

Are You Thinking Inclusion? Are You Ready for Inclusion?

When is a system ready for inclusion? When . . .

- . . . The system accepts and promotes the fact that the majority of children with special educational needs can be accommodated within the regular school system;
- . . . There is explicit recognition that the education of all children with special educational needs is a responsibility of the national school system.
- . . . Leadership and resources are provided to make primary teaching and curricula more flexible, allowing both for common experiences and specialized goals, in order to respond to a variety of individual needs and environmental circumstances—as local cultures and communities dictate.

- . . . Closer links between regular and special education, formal and non-formal systems, and school and community sectors are encouraged so as to benefit all children.
- . . . There is recognition that teacher training is a highly interactive, continuous, and supportive process of enhancing the competence of the teacher to respond to a great diversity of children's learning styles and needs.
- . . . Community and parental involvement, including distribution of control and responsibility, are encouraged.

STRATEGIES FOR INCLUSION – THE INDIAN EXPERIENCE:

How are we putting these ideas into practice in India? What is the strategy for inclusion in my state of Gujarat?

Why Inclusive Education in India:

In India, special school services are more than a century old. At present, approximately 20,000 blind children are served by nearly 400 special schools for the blind. The present scenario is that:

- (1) A disabled child has to travel to far off places, whereas a non-disabled sibling from the same family can attend the local school. This accessibility to local school is not made available to children with visual impairment.

- (2) In most villages of the country, children with disabilities of different conditions are present. As far as the standard models are concerned, one specialist teacher serves 8-10 disabled children of the same category. But the scattered villages in the country do not have an adequate number of the same category to justify the appointment of a full-time resource teacher.
- (3) The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Education for All) Campaign envisages that all children complete 8 years of schooling by 2010. If Education for All is to succeed in reality, it is imperative that children with disabilities are in school as naturally as non-disabled children.
- (4) It is necessary that the 500,000 blind children in India have access to education.
- (5) The extent of disability in each category ranges from mild cases to severe and profound cases. The mild and moderate cases are more in number than the severe and profound cases. All children with visual impairment do not need the same level and intensity of services. The classification of needs could be as follows:
 - 45% of children with low vision who can be handled by general classroom teachers;
 - 30% of children with moderate disabilities need additional care;

- 15% of children with moderate/severe disabilities need resource assistance, corrective aids, and periodical hospitalities;
- 10% of children with severe disabilities require direct attention from a special teacher.

The extent of assistance to each child will depend on the understanding of the needs of each child.

Strategy-I – Spade Work

The vast gamut of inclusion needs a great deal of brainstorming and advocacy before the formulation of a policy and plan. In India, we did the spade work by creating an atmosphere that could absorb this change.

- (a) **Rehabilitation Council of India Act-1992:** Indian is the only country in the developing world to have a Council that standardizes courses for professionals in the disability field. The aims of this Council are to ensure quality services to persons with disabilities. It has recognized more than 50 courses and 100 institutions for trained professionals.
- (b) **Persons with Disabilities Act-1995 and 2016:** This was passed to ensure equal rights, participation, and opportunities. This statute ensured that disabled persons were not discriminated against and had equal rights to all programmes, services, and opportunities as did non-disabled persons.

(c) Using All Modes for Teacher

Preparations: India has used all modes for preparing teachers of the disabled.

Regular courses

Distance-Education

Contact & Capsule Programmes

Several Universities were motivated to start these programmes. Trained teachers are absolutely necessary for retaining disabled children in schools.

- (d) **Convincing the Administration:** For inclusion to be truly successful, especially in a country like India, where the poor children study in Government Schools, it is imperative that the Education Administrators are in tune. We have enabled this by:

- Advocacy and demonstration of children's abilities;
- By the rights approach, that disabled child have a **right** to education;
- By sitting with Governments and drawing up concrete, practical and achievable programmes for inclusion;
- By advocating for and creating national- and state-level policies for inclusion education
- By creating guidelines for implementing inclusive education; and
- By establishing teacher preparation standards and guidelines that support inclusive education.

Strategy-II- Roping in the Teaching Fraternity

For successful implementation of inclusive education, it is essential that general classroom teachers accept children with disabilities. It is also essential to understand the fears that such teachers have;

- Teachers do not have enough knowledge to recognize disabilities – especially Mental Retardation.
- Teachers lack confidence to teach children with special needs, even though they were trained in the principles of good teaching.
- Teachers feel class sizes are too large to accommodate children with special needs and they are afraid of a decline in the quality of education they can provide.
- Teachers sometimes feel that their responsibility is to “discipline children,” particularly in the case of girls.
- Teachers are not aware of the meaning of child-centered learning and mostly use teacher-centered, or subject-centered, approaches.
- Teachers tend to think of their profession as one with low prestige.
- Regular teachers do not know how to design IEPs for children with special needs.

How Did We Solve This Problem?

- We trained the regular class teachers to understand the needs of these special

children and gave them methods to cope with these needs.

- Another practical step we took was to ensure that all teachers are given in-service training to enable them to understand and contribute to the education of these children in regular schools. We have already trained 1200 teachers in this regard.
- We organized workshops to explain the methodology of teaching, how to manage behaviour in the classroom (especially with MR children) and the need to consider social as well as academic goals.
- We developed inexpensive teaching materials adapted to the local context.
- We developed close communication and participation in the teaching-learning process among trainers and trainees.
- We encouraged regular contact between teachers and parents.
- We made teachers' aware of their potential to learn new things and to be successful.
- We involved the District Primary Education Programme of the Government of Gujarat, which is the implementing agency for the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Education for All) by training their Education Facilitators in Special Needs Children.
- We motivated the Government to employ Special Educators in the Think Tank that plans such programmes.

- We realized that if schools did not have expertise in educating these children, the staff should be trained in this area. The best way for creating this kind of awareness among the teachers is to include the component of special education into the curriculum of teacher training programmes.
- We distinguished between “schooling” and “education” in relation to disabled children. For disabled children, it was vital that we looked at education in a holistic way. Learning basic activities of daily living such as feeding, dressing, and toileting is essential and is often best learned in the home context. For a very small minority of severely disabled children, receiving education in the home, in play groups, and/or day centres, as part of a community based programme, was by far the most appropriate. We trained community volunteers and parents to manage these important aspects.
- We altered pre-service training to include an emphasis on strategies for children with special needs.
- We trained principals and/or internal resource teams (e.g., principal, senior teachers, Inclusive Education coordinators) to understand children with special needs.
- We strove to improve interactions among various departments, agencies, and NGOs across relevant sectors (health, education, welfare).

- We stimulated and supported collaboration between regular and special schools.

Strategy –III – Utilising the Vast Community Resources:

It is a myth that vast amounts of extra resources are needed for inclusion. The good use of existing resources is the most important thing. Whatever resources are available in the community, particularly human resources, could be used to support inclusion, can be used -- providing there is commitment. Some of the best examples of inclusion were where there were minimum resources, but maximum commitment and social support.

How Did We Involve and Use These Resources?

Our training was focused on developing social animators and volunteers to be good teachers and good educationalists. The training was not viewed as an optional “add-on” – We motivated these volunteers by emphasizing that this training was part of their social commitment.

When introducing inclusive education, we ensured that our training was as much as possible, based in-situ, and provided on-going support, with small but regular training rather than one time only, so people got an opportunity to learn from their experiences both in and outside the classroom.

Peer-support structures were developed so those involved could meet regularly and discuss the issues they faced in their work and learn from each other's experiences.

Strategy –IV – How Did We Involve Parents?

We realized it was essential that families and the wider community were involved from the start. Regular contact between school staff and parents assisted a child's educational progress. The parents' views were sought by discussion at meetings in order to develop the plan for a child's particular educational needs.

We took a variety of measures to include parents meaningfully in the education of their children:

- Family-support groups and parents' groups also helped parents with managing their children through the school, particularly at the time of entry.
- We realized that parents can play a major role in the education of their children if supported to do so and allowed to do so. We thus included assisting in school activities, reinforcing learning achieved at school, supporting the teacher, and helping the teacher to understand learning. The Resource Teacher and volunteers helped in making this possible.
- We provided education for parents on how to overcome shame and what inclusive education means.

- We provided training of parents or siblings in Braille and orientation and mobility.

Strategy –V – Inter-Sectoral Convergence:

There is a low feeling of ownership in inclusive education. For education to be truly inclusive, it is essential that several sectors converge and cooperate.

For the Media:

- Show that disabled children are children first and encourage portrayal of positive images.
- Make disability more "visible" through their reports and stories.
- Encourage journalists to be responsible, informed, and show realistic stories that neither endow children with disabilities with "special powers" or trigger feelings of pity.

For Special Schools:

- Help in identification of children;
- Help in assessment;
- Provide training to regular teachers;
- Teaching the use of special devices, such as Braille slate and stylus, arithmetic frame, and other tools.

For Politicians:

- Realise that although disabled people do not form a very large voting bank (due to their small numbers), they have a right to services as citizens of the country;
- Make disability a part of their party programmes.

For Health Sector:

- Certify qualifying persons.
- Mitigate disabilities where possible.

CONCLUSION

In the past two decades, the enrollment of blind children into schools has increased from a few hundred to 100,000 children in my state of Gujarat. It has been observed that the enrollment of blind girls in the school system has grown by leaps and bounds from 8% to 50%.

Berthold Lowenfeld said, "Education must aim at giving the blind child a knowledge of the realities around him, the confidence to cope with these realities, and the feeling that he is

recognized and accepted as an individual in his own right."

Where better can this be achieved than in a general class in the mainstream? Inclusion is no longer an enigma, it is a solution for many countries whose realities are as varied and diverse as those in India.

The following words of Bengt Lindqvist, United Nations Special Rapporteur on Disability amply clarify the concept of inclusive education (UNESCO, 1998):

"It is not our education systems that have a right to certain types of children. It is the school system of a country that must be adjusted to meet the needs of all children".

History of ICEVI

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

ICEVI Regions

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

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

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

My Journey

Rashmi Maruvada

I am Rashmi Maruvada, doing a LAW course in National Law University, Visakhapatnam.

My journey was full of ups and downs. I was born with sclerocornea, microphthalmus, and nystagmus eye conditions. I underwent cornea transplant at Chennai. But unfortunately it turned out to be unsuccessful. The dreams and hopes of my parents were shattered. They slowly picked up the threads and accepted the fact that their daughter will never be able to see this beautiful world. Thus, began their journey of acquiring knowledge about bringing me up.

They wanted me to study in a normal school, but faced rejections from many schools. Though I faced many challenges in a non-inclusive environment, I passed my class 10 exams with flying colours. Though the journey after class 10 was very encouraging as I was given admission in Apeejay school, Park Street, an inclusive school. The principal and special educator in the school ensured the availability of all the infrastructural facilities and concessions required by me. I used screen reading software, JAWS (Job Access with Speech) for all my assignments and evaluation processes. I used the audio-recorder and all the assistive devices, enabling me to perform at par with peers in an inclusive set up. I participated in all the extra-curricular

events of the school. Braille textbooks and other resource materials were provided to me free of cost by an NGO, the Society for the Visually Handicapped.

Interest in music motivated me in learning Carnatic Music. I had given many public performances and also participated and won many competitions.

I had been to a trekking camp and learned rafting and kayaking. It was the most memorable experience for me. I was the youngest of all the campers at Rishikesh-Haridwar for the white water rafting and kayaking. This exposure has really made me more confident and independent. I had undergone a mountaineering training at Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, Darjeeling, and also attended training at Indian Himalayan Center for Adventure & Eco Tourism (IHCAE) Sikkim.

The year 2010 was the turning point for me, which has changed my life so much that people have started giving me due importance, respect, and inclusion in school activities. The National Innovation Foundation made me happy by selecting my idea, a **Tricycle with pre-programmed routes for the visually challenged**, in **IGNITE 10**, the national competition for students' technological ideas and innovation, on October 15, 2010. It was a

great moment for me. **I was awarded by none other than the Ex-President of India and the greatest scientist of our country, the Late Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, on 8th Nov. 2010.** An application has been submitted for patent rights for this idea at the Indian Patent Office. This achievement was unbelievable for some people and has changed the attitude among the people who had doubts on my capabilities.

I also received an opportunity to meet the **Former President of India, Dr. Pranab Mukherjee** on the occasion of **Children's Day** on **14th November, 2016.** Apeejay School has awarded me twice with a prize of special appreciation for overcoming hurdles and striving toward betterment in 2017 and 2018.

I excelled in my class XII board exam with 85.4 %. I always wanted to pursue my career in the field of law at my level best and enhance my skills in the World of Judiciary. I took the competitive exam Common Law Admission Test (CLAT) with the help of ascribe, and I joined the National Law University at Visakhapatnam.

My life at the college was more exciting and independent. I live in a hostel and manage everything on my own. This independent life at the hostel has inspired others. I am

always at par with others in all aspects – academic and extra-curricular. My performance in the college has surprised many professors and students. Even the other people in the university are very much impressed with my organised way of adjusting to the hostel life. Now they appreciate my abilities and encourage me to participate in all the activities.

I also had the opportunity to present a paper in a conference at Kathmandu on 17th February. This conference is organised by ICEVI- the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment. I also earned the opportunity to represent my university in the National Moot competition at Gurgaon and Delhi. This exposure has made me more confident.

I have always been supported by many people, including my family, friends, teachers, mentors from India as well as from the United Kingdom and the United States of America. . . . Life is a journey of self-discovery. Today everyone is proud of my achievements. I have a long way to go. I will strive to become an efficient and productive, global Law professional through a continuous and everlasting process of learning and self-development.

Importance of Parents in Education of the VI/MDVI Child

Mrs. Pallavi Kadam

Executive Director, National Association for the Blind, India

Introduction

Every child's life journey begins in the hands of his/her parent. It is worth saying that our parents are our FIRST teachers and later on we meet our OTHER teachers. Parents play a very proactive role in overall development of a child's career, especially when the child is born with special needs and care. As parents play a vital role in their children's lives, it is expected that they will play an active part in the educational journey of their child. This paper highlights the important role of parents in providing education to visually impaired (VI) and multiply disabled visually impaired (MDVI) children.

Early Intervention Do's & Don'ts

What should parents do when they have a special child in their family? First, parents need to be knowledgeable and well informed about the child's disability, in order to stimulate his or her lifelong development. This begins even in the early intervention process, when the child is first learning. Be focused on the child's developmental delays, but resist the temptation to assume your child isn't capable of learning, playing, and doing the usual things that children do because of his or her disability. Other ideas:

- Push your child to take the lead in activities without thinking about failures. And if something doesn't work, try it another way!
- Praise your child selectively, rather than criticising or comparing him or her with siblings or neighbourhood children.
- Show gratitude for good behaviour and try to avoid negativity completely (your child will learn virtues first from you)
- Understand your child's needs and requirements and encourage him or her to explore the world to fulfil his or her own needs.
- Give your child a chance to play with different types of household items at home – dishes, bowls, cups, fruits, vegetables (safety first!).
- Following the Play-and-Learn method, introduce the basic educational concepts of size, shape, texture, and colour using whatever is available in the household.
- Be particularly aware of your child's tactile sense and the other senses, too – but the child with vision impairment will come to rely on his or her touch and use it to verify things heard or smelled.
- Talk to the child like you talk to children with sight, so your child will respond to terms like "SEE," "BEAUTIFUL," and other

“vision” words (because that's what your child will hear the rest of his or her life).

- Do not move the child's toys or other objects from their fixed location/where they belong. If you do move them, then properly guide your child to understand the new location, repeatedly, if necessary, until he or she is confident.
- Remember that your child spends most of the day with you during the early years, so you are very important!

Why Parents are Important in This Journey

Children with visual impairment and/or multiple impairments are a part of this society, and education is also an important aspect of their lives. They shouldn't face any discrimination or denial for their education. Considering children's strengths and weaknesses, their parents are the main key factor in their educational journey. Being the first teacher of their child, the parents know their child's strengths and weaknesses better than anyone else. The child is more comfortable with his or her parents than with another adults. Their child's small achievement also boosts the positivity of the parents and vice versa – it cheers the child positively to achieve more success. Parents' involvement in the special education decision making process is extremely important as it has direct connection with the child.

Duties of Parents

Parenthood comes with a multitude of responsibilities and duties for the wellbeing

of children. Parents certainly want to see their children grow up to be healthy, happy, and exceptional adults, but to achieve this goal their children need to be properly cared for, guided, loved, disciplined, taught, and encouraged along the way. Parents' responsibility towards their child begins with the moment of his/her birth. As a parent, it is necessary to make sure that your child stays active during outside playtime, sports, and other activities. Parents must be sure to spend quality time with the child while at home. While spending time with child, parents need to ensure his space also.

Education is the basic right of each child and it is a duty of a parent to assure a quality education to his child considering the child's abilities and needs. Each parent should not only build rapport with the child, but also shares a good bonding with child. In addition, parents should encourage and support the child to make decision on his or her own. They must focus on finding out how the child learns. Parents' role is to be the path finder, the person who supports the child to explore on his or her own for new things. Being a parent, one should not impose one's own ideas and dreams on their child.

Different Programs Arranged For Parents by NAB, India

As mentioned above, parents are the first teachers of their child. They are trying their level best to improve their child's future. When the child is born with visual impairment or multiple impairments, it is

almost certain that parents, too, need to overcome this early phase with counselling, training, and social gatherings. Considering these parent needs, NAB India is offering a few activities for the parents of VI or MDVI children on a regular basis. It is our experience that these activities help parents to come out of their trauma, supports them through training, and engages them on social platforms to be a role model for the other parents, especially the newer parents. Simultaneously, on a voluntary basis, parents offer their experiences and services to other VI/MDVI children, which stimulates other parents to work hard for their children.

The programs arranged by NAB India are:

- Para professional course for parents of VI/MDVI students
- Mother's workshop on teenage related issues
- Parents (MDVI Students) workshop on acceptance and non-acceptance of the disability
- Picnic of Mothers of MDVI Students (without children)
- Three-day residential workshop with parents of MDVI children on teaching daily living skills
- Mother's Day celebration for all the female parents (Night Out)
- One-day workshop for fathers of MDVI students on their role/involvement in the progress of their child
- Two- or three-days' outing for the parents of children with cerebral palsy

- Matru din celebration, parents' worship day (Hindu)
- Formation of the MDVI parents support group
- Individual counselling sessions as and when required

Parents' Experiences

NAB India has pioneered many such activities with the parents and children. Some parents have shared their experiences about some of our organized events below, to demonstrate to other the importance of parents in the education and overall development of the child with special needs:

"I never knew that there are students like my child, I always thought that it's only me who is facing these problems all these years."

"This workshop gave me a lot of confidence, now I can face the society, will tell the people about his condition instead of hiding him."

"In this workshop I realised that my child is far better off than other children with multiple disabilities."

"We both [husband & wife] together can build the future of our child if we work together instead of accusing each other."

"Today I realised that there is somebody who can understand me and with whom I can share the happy moments I spent with my child. We are sailing in the same boat."

"I have also right of dreaming and make plans for my child's future."

“In this camp I travelled without lifting my child, otherwise after his birth I had forgotten to walk without lifting him.”

Involvement of the Society At Large

Along with the parents, society also plays an important role in the development of our VI / MDVI students. We do lots of awareness/sensitization programs for the peers of our VI students, so that they will understand the problems faced by the VI student who is studying in their class.

Math Programme: In Maharashtra the visually challenged students are availing the concession to take 7th standard math instead of regular math in standard 10th. This had created a problem for the students' ability to pursue a professional career in future. They were not able to compete with the other peer groups. With the help of Mission for Vision, we are running a project of a regular Math programme in Maharashtra, and a total 89 of students have benefited from this programme. This model is very successful and students have secured more than 90 percent correct in standard 10th with regular math.

Maharashtra Higher Secondary Certificate Board exams: One of our students appeared for the exam by using her laptop to solve her papers on her own; in this journey her parents played a great role.

MDVI Unit: A lot of interactions/Training Programs for parents have been organized, so that their involvement with their child increases. Through these training parents

gain confidence. One of our female students from the MDVI Unit (vision problem with Autism) earned first prize among all VI participants in All India Radio Udan Idol Award singing competition. Her teachers and her parents are two pillars in her achievement. She sings in dual voice (male and female). She has not addressed her parents as mummy or papa yet, even then she is an expert in singing. We encourage the students to participate in these types of activities and encourage the parents to support the child as well.

NAB India: NAB has pioneered many new avenues of employment for visually challenged persons with the use of the latest technology, such as medical transcription; call center; human resource profiles; and professional courses like acupuncture, massage, and physiotherapy. Recently we initiated a diploma course of perfumery with a corporation from the fragrance industry.

Conclusion

With the different methods of addressing the child with the help of their parents and society at large specified above, we can achieve a lot. Parents indeed play a very significant role in development of a child's career, whether it is a child with disability or any other child. The success of VI and MDVI children and youths demonstrates the vital need for the involvement of parents and the importance of parents in the overall growth and development of their children.

Success Stories of our Advocacy Initiatives: The Long and Hard Roads....

Ms. Kinnari Desai

Advocacy Manager, Blind Peoples' Association (India), Ahmedabad

Advocacy is a process, and it is being used to bring systemic changes in the society, policies, and people who are in power. We have seen shifts from charity to welfare, welfare to social inclusion, and social inclusion to a human rights approach. These shifts are the result of persistent individual efforts and effective collective voices. Due to strong Advocacy, today we have excellent laws and policies to protect the rights of people with disabilities. However, we need to educate and empower people to access these rights, as mere knowledge or information will not help protect their rights. To create awareness in the society, improve acceptance, change the attitude towards people with disabilities, and promote real inclusion is a tough task, but sustainable collective advocacy efforts will surely bring change!!

The Blind People's Association India (BPA)¹ believes in holding hands, extending services, building bridges, and developing intergroup dialogues through advocacy initiatives. Hence, BPA's variety of advocacy initiatives are geared towards protecting rights and promoting inclusion. Our

philosophy of a Twin Track Approach will be clearly visible at all the levels which involve community and people with disability at every stage. In this paper, I will discuss various approaches of BPA on promoting advocacy, including education, employment, empowerment, accessibility, and adjustment training.

I will share with you how BPA has used its good office, media and networks to influence, implement, and improve systems for promoting inclusion².

Education

To improve the quality of education, BPA was advocating for an amendment in Recruitment Rules to recruit teachers with qualifications as Special Educator for special schools, treating special teachers at par with regular teachers since past many years. BPA's executives were actively participating in drafting the State Disability Policy and working closely with all the departments including the Department of Education to help them understand and initiate the process of implementing the newly enacted law "Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act,

¹Visit website www.bpaindia.org for more details

²PowerPoint Presentation is available on Google Docs at URL:

https://drive.google.com/drive/u/1/folders/1JxtbAloMJ7Z9MLz83ITkvy6FSiwsZY_C

2016³” and the Draft State Policy on Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities. Our executives worked intensively with the Department of Education and helped them identify areas to prepare revised guidelines and rules to promote appropriate education of persons with disabilities. Finally, the Department of Education was the very first Department of Gujarat that issued 13 new Government Orders to implement all provisions under the legislation related to facilitating education for children with disabilities under all modes of education.

Employment

BPA is continuously imparting contemporary skills, building bridges with potential employers, and providing additional support to employers for making their workplace inclusive and accessible for people with disabilities. Recruitment is not a onetime activity for BPA. We extend our support to employers for creating conducive environments at the workplace, which helps keep employees with disabilities in their jobs. For example, Ford Motors India Pvt. Ltd. (Sanand Plant) has employed 50 employees with disabilities. To facilitate this process of employing such persons, we moved steps by step; beginning with conducting meetings with the plant head and leaders, doing access audits and modifying workplaces, and inviting leaders and executives of employer to BPA to expose and sensitize them to people with

disabilities. The next stage was organizing interaction between the potential employer’s Human Resources Department and people with disabilities, who explained their needs in respect to reasonable accommodation. This was followed with preparing profiles of identified positions suitable for people with disabilities, identifying potential candidates, conducting basic examinations, and conducting interviews at BPA. The final step was organizing meetings with parents at the plant, conducting accessible induction training at the workplace, organizing sensitization workshops for the team leaders and supervisors, and finally teaching communication skills to team leaders and concerned officers.

Ford Motors has not only recruited people with disability, but also started influencing its venter companies and other industries located in adjoining industrial areas. It also decided to conduct an Employment Fair for people with disabilities with the guidance of BPA. It invited potential employers to their plant and shared their experiences of hiring people with disabilities for their plant. They successfully motivate 20 companies to participate in their Employment Fair, and those 20 companies recruited a minimum 1 to 2 people with disabilities for their respective plants. Through this grand Employment Fair, 70 candidates obtained jobs after the constant and collective

³See the complete Act at:

https://indiacode.nic.in/handle/123456789/2155?view_type=search&sam_handle=123456789/1362

follow-up by BPA and Ford Motors. Moreover, BPA focuses on imparting contemporary trainings to people with visual impairment to earn their livelihood. For example, hands on training through Japanese Medical Manual Therapy (JMMT) and scientific massage is enabling persons with visual impairment to go into self-employment with excellent earning opportunities. Many others are now finding employment as message therapists in spas, health clubs, gymnasiums, and therapeutic centers. BPA also prepares potential candidates to take up competitive exams for their recruitment with banks or other Government jobs. It conducts workshops and need-based classes for people with visual impairment to teach them mathematics, English, and reasoning of competitive exams. To date BPA has helped 30 candidates to clear the competitive exams and obtain jobs in Banks.

Empowerment

On the one hand, BPA conducts a variety of leadership workshops and capacity building trainings to empower people with disabilities. It sensitizes community stakeholders to enhance their acceptance and promote their inclusion. For example, we conduct leadership workshop for women with visual impairment, which are supported by ICEVI West Asia every year. During these workshops, we teach them basic communication skills, computers, body language and mannerisms, table etiquette, grooming for jobs, preparing resumes, and

interview skills. We also conduct capacity building training programs, to help them understand the concepts of human rights, special rights of women, and special rights of children with disabilities and their parents. The purpose of these workshops is to help them understand the importance of protecting their rights and developing a rights-based approach and understanding of their statutory entitlements in every sphere of their progress and growth.

We also extend our services to sensitize civil society organizations, corporate and local leaders to include people with disabilities in their existing programs and schemes. For example, we are working with Future Groups, which is running Big Bazaar Malls all over India. We helped them sensitize their staff on diversity, especially on handling parents who have children/adults with severe disabilities. This has helped them introduce "Quiet Hours" for people with autism and parents who have children with disabilities at home.

Quiet hours are observed regularly on every Tuesday from 10:30 AM to 12:30 PM. We have helped Big Bazaar to develop a small play zone for children with severe disabilities. Parents can leave their children with disabilities under the observation of an attendant who is trained by us for the play zone and do their shopping without any tension. During the quiet hours regular shoppers are not restricted but are given brief information and brochures about the quiet hours celebration at Big Bazaar mall.

During this process, we also developed theme-based workshops, such as “Cooking without Looking” for people with visual impairment, all with the support and sponsorship of Big Bazaar.

Accessibility

Accessibility is an essential component of inclusion. To ensure equal participation of people with disabilities, we conduct access audits and help modify an existing environment to provide safe and independent access with dignity for people with disabilities. Previously it was difficult to convince authorities to incorporate accessibility components when designing a public building, but after enactment of the Rights of Persons with Disability Act (2016) and adoption of the Accessible India Campaign⁴, our task has become easier. For example, we could easily convince Gujarat State Road Transport Corporation to start thinking about accessibility as its newly constructed Bus Stations are not accessible to people having reduced mobility. They immediately accepted our suggestion and sent their chief engineer to learn about and understand accessibility. As a result, the authority has not only started thinking about accessibility but also required their 200 Depot Managers to attend sensitization workshops conducted by BPA at its premises.

After enactment of the new law, we are helping several organizations, public places, and private places to become accessible for all. We help them design signage, ramps, accessible information, inventing accessible products/technology and so forth for people with disability. The “Accessible India Campaign” has created awareness and people are inquiring about accessible environment, accessible products, and ways to modify their websites to provide accessible information.

Adjustment Trainings

Adjustment training is our unique program for people who acquire or are identified with disability at later stages of life. We provide need-based training to our clients keeping their age, gender, experiences, interests, and social background in mind. We provide age appropriate training in daily living skills, mobility training, teaching computers, using smart mobile phones, and counseling to accept and adjust with the current situation. Every year we provide such training to 15 newly identified people with disabilities. We also work very closely with their families to increase acceptance and empower them to provide a positive environment at home for better adjustment.

To highlight the outcome of these measures, I am sharing 3 successful stories of Jyoti,

⁴<http://disabilityaffairs.gov.in/content/page/accessible-india-campaign.php>

Khyati and Suman, who availed all these services at BPA and now they are role models for other women with disabilities⁵.



Jyoti is coming from a middle class family and started losing sight at the age of 22.

Someone referred her to BPA. She was pursuing a course of study as Chartered

Accountant, but due to her eye problem, she left her studies. We taught her mobility as she was unable to commute all by herself. Being an elder child, she wanted to support her family as she had lost her father. After several counseling sessions, we managed to schedule special classes of Mathematics and Reasoning for her at campus and increased her confidence. She started preparing for competitive exams and is currently working as Probationary Officer at the Bank of Baroda, a leading nationalized bank.



Khyati lost her sight at the time of her pregnancy. Her in-laws kicked her out of the house with the newborn baby. She

came to BPA as a very depressed person who lost hope to survive. She started coming to BPA regularly and started learning mobility and computer operations. We also polished her cooking skills. She regained her lost confidence and strength to

fight back with the society. Currently she is working with a corporate house and living a life with dignity. A lady who lost hope to survive is now guiding other women who need counselling and guidance to regain their lost confidence.



Suman lost her sight when she was teaching economics. She comes from a conservative family who never let her move out alone. She came to know about us and convinced her

family to take her to BPA. She and her parents met executives of BPA and they decided that she will stay back for the adjustment training. She learnt computers and mobility. After the successful completion of adjustment training, she attended a leadership workshop at the BPA. After which, the BPA recommended her name for the post of special teacher in Vadodara. She is teaching Gujarati and Hindi language to students with visual impairment. Recently she got married and she is managing her professional and personal life successfully.

What a transformation – from home confined person to a teacher in a regular school.

We also plan special sessions if we see specific potential qualities in our clients. We have planned special career counseling, exposure to self-employment, enabled them

⁵These stories have been uploaded on You Tube with URL:
<https://www.youtube.com/user/bpaindia/videos?sort=dd&view=0>

to restart their previous activities, and provided legal counseling or home-based training according to the requirements of individual clients.

As I said earlier, the task to change the perception towards people with disabilities is not an easy one, but when we collectively advocate using the Twin Track approach, we definitely achieve our goal. Though the road is hard and long, we believe in educating people, developing intergroup dialogues,

and generating discussion. Direct confrontation or agitation are our last resources. We use the media, our good relationships, and the spirit and the words of the law to see that laws do not remain paper tigers, but are transformed into concrete benefits for people with disabilities. We are confident that “If we can do, you can definitely do.” Let us hold hands to “Make this world a better place to live”.

Parent Perspectives

Parents Are Welcome!

WBU-ICEVI Joint General Assemblies, May 21-26, 2021

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

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

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

IAPVI invites you to meet with us in Madrid to join our worldwide network of parents! Join us in Madrid, Spain, May 21-26, 2021!

Sincerely,

Susan LaVenture, President of IAPVI
laventuresusan506@gmail.com

Recommendations from the ICEVI West Asia -Sense India International Conference

Inclusive Education: Leaving No One Behind

16 – 18 February, 2020 H Kathmandu

Recommendations Committee:

Dr. Frances Gentle, President, ICEVI
Mr. A. K. Mittal, Secretary General, World Blind Union
Prof. S. R. Mittal, Delhi University
Ms. Sampada Shevde, Perkins International
Ms. Vimal Thawani, BPA India
Mr. Uttam Kumar, Sense India

The 2020 ICEVI West Asia – Sense India International Conference, held in Katmandu, Nepal, adopted the following 15 recommendations:

EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION (ECCE):

1. Professionals to share simple information and techniques of intervention with families, communities in order to de-mystify disability.
2. Conference delegates and participating organizations to utilize all possible media and avenues for reaching out to families and communities with information on ECCE.
3. Participating organizations to provide ECCE training programmes for stake holders, including education and health workers and families.

CURRICULUM:

4. Mathematics to form an integral part of curriculum at all stages of education. Conference delegates strongly commend the ICEVI initiative of developing instructional videos on mathematical concepts and uploading to YouTube.
5. The Expanded Core Curriculum areas to receive equal importance in the education of children with visual impairment.
6. Curriculum adaptations and Individual Education Planning to be part of national policy planning.

7. Teacher training to include transition planning based on the life cycle approach.
8. Good practices in inclusive education to be shared by the countries in the region.
9. National census to include enumeration of persons with multiple disabilities and deafblindness.
10. Participating organisations to develop indicators for measuring quality, equitable and inclusive education to guide educational authorities, schools and communities.
11. The term “special education” relates to an approach across settings; and the term “special school” relates to a setting. The terms should not be used synonymously.

TECHNOLOGY:

12. Education service providers to promote and facilitate access to user-friendly technology in teaching and learning of children with disabilities across educational settings.
13. Child-centered approaches in technology use to promote personal dignity, independence and joy of learning.
14. All sustainable services and programs in urban and rural communities to promote gender equity, including empowerment of women with disabilities.
15. Vocational training programs in collaborative partnerships to include contemporary trades and promote employment and income generating activities.



CALL FOR PAPERS – THE EDUCATOR

Submission Guidelines

Thank you for your interest in writing an article for the upcoming issues of The Educator. The next two issues have the following themes:

- **Braille** (submissions due June 1, 2020)
- **Online Education** (submissions due December 1, 2020)

We have not had an issue dedicated to Braille since 2012. A lot has happened since then – new technologies, new codes, new research, new policies. A lot has not changed, too – many issues and controversies are still being discussed. Where are we today? Submit your paper by June 1, 2020.

The Covid-19 pandemic saw schools closed across the world. What happened to students with visual impairment and VI/multiple disabilities during this time? How were you able to teach? What strategies did you use? Were students with visual impairment left behind or simply ignored? Did inclusive education become less inclusive during this time? What does that do to the Sustainable Development Goals? Submit your paper by December 1, 2020.

GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS

- Usually articles for the The Educator are 4-6 pages in length, 2000-3000 words.
- For many readers of the The Educator, English may not be a first or primary language. Please write in a clear style, avoiding jargon or colloquialisms. If you use acronyms, abbreviations, or technical terms, please define them when first used in the manuscript.
- Your article should not have been published before, either in print or online. If your article contains material copyrighted by others, please include a copy of the author's permission to use the material.
- If you use footnotes, please format them as endnotes.
- Please use this citation style for the reference list (if any) at the end of the article:

Book:

Keller, H. (1908). The world I live in. New York, NY: Century.

Article:

Vlden, M (2018). Conducting psychotherapy with individual with acquired deafblindness. Dbl Review, volume#(issue number), page numbers.

- When referring to the work of another author within your text, please use this citation style (include the page number):
- “The very specific challenge related to deafblindness is that the person to some degree has a restricted access to information and communication” (Viden, 2018, p. 6).
- When you submit your article, please include the following information:
 - Name of author(s)
 - Author’s affiliation (university, service organization, agency, etc.)
 - Affiliation’s city, state, country
 - Email address of author
 - Telephone (please include international dialing codes)

Keep in mind that the job of an editor is to edit. Your paper will be returned to you after editing for your approval. You will have a very short time period in which to respond.

Again, thank you for your willingness to contribute to The Educator. Please let us know how we can assist you.

Kay Alicyn Ferrell

Editor

kay.ferrell@comcast.net

Networking with other organizations

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

Publications

ICEVI’s biannual magazine “The Educator” is available in electronic version in both English and Spanish and is also posted on our website www.icevi.org. ICEVI also publishes a biannual electronic newsletter that is currently distributed to more than 4000 individuals and organizations.

Website of ICEVI

www.icevi.org

International Partner Members



CBM
www.cbm.org



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



ONCE
www.once.es



Overbrook School for the Blind
www.obs.org



Perkins School for the Blind
www.perkins.org



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

R N I B

See differently

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



Sightsavers
www.sightsavers.org



The Norwegian Association of the
Blind and Partially Sighted

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



Royal Dutch Visio
www.visio.org

Organisational Members

American Printing House for the Blind
www.aph.org

Canadien National Institute for the Blind
www.cnib.ca

Federazione Nazionale Delle Istituzioni Pro Ciechi
www.prociechi.it

Hadley School for the Blind
www.hadley.edu

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

Lions Clubs International Foundation
www.lcif.org

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



WBU/ICEVI Joint General Assemblies Postponed to May 21-26, 2021

Dear Members and Friends:

The World Blind Union (WBU), the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI), and the Organización Nacional de Ciegos Españoles (ONCE) announce the postponement of the joint WBU and ICEVI general assemblies.

The WBU/ICEVI joint general assemblies will be held from May 21 through 26, 2021 in Madrid. Thanks to the local host, ONCE, the cost for rooms at the Madrid Marriot Auditorium are unchanged.

We know you will have many questions and ask your patience as we develop a "Frequently Asked Questions" document.

The International Organizing Committee felt it necessary to postpone the WBU/ICEVI general assemblies to protect the health and safety of all delegates and other attendees as the world works to combat the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

We cannot express strongly enough our appreciation for the efforts of our local host, ONCE, in managing this very complicated situation.

As more information becomes available, it will be sent to our members and posted on our organization's websites.

We wish all of you, your families and friends, and your communities health and safety, and appreciate your understanding during this very difficult time.

Sincerely yours,

The WBU/ICEVI/ONCE International Organizing Committee