



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



ICEVI E-NEWS

(ICEVI General Assembly Special Issue)

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Message from the President and CEO

Dear friends and colleagues,

We are happy to meet you through this E-News just before the World Blindness Summit (WBS) which will take place virtually on 28-30 June 2021. This E-News issue comes to you as the ICEVI General Assembly special issue and provides an overview of our key events that will take place during the Assembly.

The World Blindness Summit is the first ever virtual Assembly organised by ICEVI and the World Blind Union (WBU), and we acknowledge the important role of our host organisation, ONCE, the Spanish National Organisation of the Blind. At the time of writing, there were over 3000 registrations from more than 190 countries, and we are certain the event will be a great learning experience for us all. Registration is free, and the Summit is inclusive of a Technology and Accessibility Conference on June 25th, a Youth Summit on June 26th, and the Assemblies of ICEVI and WBU on 28th to 30th June. Please visit the WBS website to register and view the program - www.worldblindnesssummit.com.

The program includes a key constitutional event of ICEVI, which is the General Assembly. In a face-to-face event, the General Assembly would be also attended by other participants as observers. However, as the WBS will be virtual, engaging with the larger constituency presents organisational challenges. ICEVI is therefore restricting attendance of the 90-minute General Assembly to the delegates only. However, in order to uphold the spirit of ICEVI in keeping our broader constituency well informed, we have dedicated this E-News to presenting an overview of the planned ICEVI General Assembly discussions.

This is the last news bulletin for the 2017-2021 Quadrennium. We wish to thank our members, partners and supporters around the world for promoting the ICEVI Mission of equitable access to quality inclusive education for all children with visual impairment. We shall meet you with another E-news soon after the ICEVI General Assembly.



Frances Gentle
President



M.N.G. Mani
CEO

The historical virtual World Blindness Summit - A few Days Away

The World Blindness Summit of the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment and the World Blind Union in collaboration with ONCE, the Host Organisation, was to be held in Madrid, Spain in June 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic caused the Summit to be postponed and rescheduled as a virtual event on 28 - 30 June 2021. At the moment more than 3000 participants have registered for the event.

The Summit will be inaugurated by Her Royal Highness the Queen of Spain and consists of the following three components: (1) the opening and valedictory sessions and a book launch ceremony, (2) a series of thematic webinars organised by experts, and (3) the general assemblies of WBU and ICEVI which are participated only by their delegates.

Key agenda items of the ICEVI General Assembly

The ICEVI General Assembly will take place from 12.30 pm to 2.00 pm Madrid time on 29 June 2021. There are 13 delegates from each of the seven ICEVI regions who are eligible to take part in the General Assembly in addition to 21 members of the ICEVI Executive Committee thus taking the total number to 112.

The ICEVI General Assembly agenda includes two key themes that we want our constituency to know about. First is a discussion of the proposed ICEVI constitutional amendments and the second is pertaining to the election of a new slate of principal officers for the Quadrennium 2021 - 24. As the General Assembly is attended only by the delegates, we wish to share the an overview of the agenda notes with the larger constituency of ICEVI and the details are provided in the subsequent sections of this E-News.

ICEVI Constitutional Amendments

Information about the ICEVI Governance Framework and constitutional amendments proposed by the ICEVI Executive Committee were published in the January 2021 issue of [The Educator](#) and circulated to the voting delegates of the General Assembly. Of the total voting delegates, we have received 88 responses. Of this group, 85 endorsed the constitutional amendments and three abstained. There was no opposition to the proposed amendments.

For the amendments to be passed, we need a quorum of two third of voting delegates, that is, 74 delegates. Therefore, the proposed constitutional amendments have technically been approved through email by the delegates. As a result, no voting on the constitutional amendments is required during the June 2021 virtual General Assembly. Therefore, we have consensus on the resolution that the “constitutional amendments proposed by the ICEVI Executive Committee in the Articles of Association (AOA) and the Memorandum of Association (MOA), which were published in the January 2021 issue of The Educator and also circulated to the delegates of the ICEVI General Assembly be approved.”

Consequently, the amendments will be carried out in the existing Articles of Association and Memorandum of Association of ICEVI and posted on the [ICEVI website](#) and also circulated to the ICEVI voting delegates along with the proceedings of the 2021 General Assembly.

Outgoing and Incoming Regional Presidents

The Latin America, East Asia, North America, Pacific, and the West Asia regions of ICEVI have recently undertaken elections for their regional Presidents for the Quadrennium 2021-24. The Africa region will hold their elections in November 2021 as per the Constitution of the ICEVI Africa region. Similarly, ICEVI Europe will elect its regional President in the forthcoming Regional Assembly which is planned for 2022. The details of outgoing regional Presidents and the incoming regional Presidents of the ICEVI regions are as follows:

Africa region: The present regional President **Ms. Gertrude Oforiwa Fefoame** from Ghana has contributed significantly to the growth of ICEVI Africa region. It was during her tenure that the Africa region became a legal entity. The regional President of the region for the forthcoming Quadrennium will be introduced to the ICEVI delegates once the Africa Regional Board meeting is concluded in November 2021, when the regional President is elected.

East Asia region: The current regional President, **Ms. Aria Indrawati** from Indonesia, has been re-elected for the Quadrennium 2021 - 2024. Aria heads the region where one of the flagship programmes of ICEVI - The Nippon Foundation supported higher education project - is underway. Aria is also instrumental in registering the ICEVI Indonesia network as a legal body.

Europe region: For the Quadrennium 2017-20, **Mrs. Panagiota (Betty) Leotsakou** from Greece was elected as the regional President. Due to the tragic demise of Betty in 2017, **Dr. Hans Welling**, the former vice President of ICEVI global and also the regional President of the Europe region was asked by the region to serve as the regional President for the rest of the Quadrennium. Hans is a great supporter of ICEVI in various capacities. The regional President of the Europe region will be elected when its regional Assembly is held in 2022. Therefore, Hans is continuing as the regional President until the new regional President is elected.

Latin America region: **Ms. Cristina Sanz** from Argentina served as the regional President of the Latin America region and contributed significantly to its development. It was during her tenure as the regional President that the region was registered as a legal entity. Cristina has decided not to run for the position for the forthcoming Quadrennium. ICEVI places on record its gratitude to Cristina for her contribution. **Mr. Julio César Canizález** from El Salvador has been elected as the new regional President of the Latin America region. ICEVI wishes him great success in his position.

North America and the Caribbean region: **Dr. Kay Ferrell** from the USA served as the regional President of the North America and the Caribbean region for the past two Quadrennium. Kay has contributed significantly to ICEVI over many years. One recent contribution was her leadership in developing the [ICEVI teacher training curriculum](#) for inclusive education. Kay is also serving as the Editor of ICEVI's magazine, *The Educator*. ICEVI profoundly thanks Kay for her contribution as President of the North America and the Caribbean region. ICEVI is pleased that she will continue in the position of Editor of *The Educator*. **Ms. Susan LaVenture** is a passionate advocate and leader of parents of children with visual impairment at the global level. She has been elected as the regional President of the NAC region for the Quadrennium 2021-24. ICEVI believes that her new position will provide impetus for strengthening the parents' movement within ICEVI.

Pacific region: **Mr. Ben Clare** from Australia served as the regional President of the Pacific region for the Quadrennium 2017-20. Ben expanded the activities of ICEVI in the island countries of the region and contributed significantly to the area of technology. Ben is not continuing as the regional President of the Pacific region in the

forthcoming Quadrennium. ICEVI places on record its gratitude to Ben for his contributions to the growth of Pacific regional activities. **Dr. Joanne Webber** from Australia works in the disability and development field and has been elected the new regional President of the Pacific region. ICEVI wishes Jo every success and anticipates she will bring new perspectives to the regional development in the Pacific region.

West Asia region: Dr. Bhushan Punani from India served as the regional President of the West Asia region for many terms. With his legal background, he contributed significantly to ICEVI in framing policies. He has also represented ICEVI in global forums and organised regional conferences during his tenure as West Asia President. ICEVI places on record its gratitude to Bhushan. The West Asia region has elected **Mr. Birendra Raj Pokharel** from Nepal as its new regional President. Birendra is closely associated with ICEVI Nepal. Being an activist in the field, Birendra will certainly bring new momentum to the ICEVI West Asia region.

New Principal Officers for the Quadrennium

Andrew Griffiths, Chair of the ICEVI Nominations Committee, shared with the voting delegates of ICEVI the slate of Principal Officers proposed for the Quadrennium 2021-24, with a request to endorse the nomination or provide any other alternative nominations. The proposed candidates are as follows:

- **Dr. Frances Gentle** for the position of President,
- **Dr. Bhushan Punani** for First Vice President,
- **Ms. Sabine Fijn van Draat** for Second Vice President, and
- **Dr. Praveena Sukhraj-Ely** for the position of Treasurer.

Following is the summary of the responses received from the delegates before the stipulated deadline of 20 May 2021:

- 88 endorsements approving the slate of principal offices were received. This exceeds the 2/3rd majority of the ICEVI delegates.
- No opposition to the proposed candidates was received from any delegate.
- No alternative names were suggested for any of the four positions.

In a face-to-face General Assembly, the slate of Principal Officers would be tabled by the Nominations Committee for endorsement. The delegates would either approve the candidates or propose candidates from the floor of the General Assembly. As this process is cumbersome in a virtual General Assembly, the General Assembly delegates were contacted by email by the Chair of the Nominations Committee and requested to send their written responses by return email.

The delegate responses clearly indicate that the slate of candidates for the Principal Officer positions has received overwhelming endorsement and are technically elected to assume office for the next Quadrennium. A formal resolution to this effect will be made by the Chair of the Nominations Committee at the virtual General Assembly.

The outgoing and incoming Principal Officers are as follows:

President: Dr. Frances Gentle (Australia):

Dr. Gentle has been President of ICEVI for the past quadrennium and has been elected for a second term. She has contributed significantly to the field of education for children with blindness or low vision in Australia and internationally for the past three decades. She is also co-President of the South Pacific Educators in Vision Impairment (SPEVI); and represents ICEVI on the Executive Committee of World Blind Union. Frances is a member of the academic and research staff at the NextSense Institute (formerly the Renwick Centre for Research and Professional Education within the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children, Australia); and holds conjoint positions with Macquarie University and the University of Newcastle.

First Vice President:

Outgoing First Vice President: Dr. Praveena Sukhraj-Ely (South Africa):

Dr. Sukhraj-Ely served as the First Vice President of ICEVI from 2016-20. She represented ICEVI and the World Blind Union (WBU) on the International Disability Alliance and also represented ICEVI on the Accessible Books Consortium and many other international bodies.

Incoming First Vice President: Dr. Bhushan Punani (India): Dr. Punani has been elected by the delegates for the position of the First Vice President of ICEVI. Bhushan has a long and active history within ICEVI and is General Secretary of Blind People's Association (India). He has significant experience in advocacy for the rights of people with

visual impairment. ICEVI believes that his extensive administrative experience and legal background will auger well for the organisation.

Second Vice President:

Outgoing Second Vice President: Ms. Rima Canawati (Palestine):

Ms. Rima Canawati has a long history with ICEVI and undertook significant work for increasing the involvement of ICEVI in the Middle East sub-region. She played a key role in implementation of the education for all children with visual impairment campaign in Palestine and contributed to the policy statements of ICEVI submitted to global bodies.

Incoming Second Vice President – Ms. Sabine Fijn van

Draat (The Netherlands): Ms. Sabine Fijn van Draat has been serving on the Executive Committee of ICEVI for the past seven years, representing Royal Dutch Visio, one of our International Partner Members. She has led the work of the ICEVI Executive Governance Committee in the past quadrennium, which has successfully completed its work. She has extensive experience in development and working on inclusive education and is currently Coordinator of the Allied Charity Foundation, The Netherlands.

Treasurer:

Outgoing Treasurer: Mrs. Nandini Rawal (India):

Mrs. Nandini Rawal has served as Treasurer of ICEVI for three terms and established clear financial structures that will strengthen ICEVI going forward. She is currently serving as the Executive Director of the Blind People's Association, which is one of the premier organisations for persons with disabilities in India. Nandini has been a major contributor to ICEVI's recent publications on education of children with multiple disability and deafblindness. She is one of the most popular faces in ICEVI circles. Known for her excellent communication loaded with a sense of humour and poems, she served as the master of ceremonies for many international events of ICEVI.

Incoming Treasurer: Dr. Praveena Sukhraj-Ely (South Africa):

Financial management and accounting are some of the core job functions performed by Dr. Praveena Sukhraj-Ely on a daily basis as a Director in her employment with the National Department of Justice and Constitutional Development in South Africa. Dr Praveena has experience in a range of functions that are associated with the position of Treasurer. Her various positions in government and national and

international NGOs will allow her to support ICEVI effectively during the next quadrennium.

Regional Meetings

In addition to the ICEVI General Assembly, there is also a time slot for organising regional meetings for discussing regional issues and this is scheduled for 11.00 am to 12.30 pm Madrid Time on the 29th June 2021. Some regions of ICEVI may not be holding the regional meetings due to challenging time zones.

Below are details for each region. The meetings are open to participants of the World Blindness Summit.

- **Africa region:** Will conduct the meeting of the Regional Board with full agenda.
- **East Asia region:** Already conducted virtual meeting and will not use the time slot.
- **Europe region:** Will use the time slot for two presentations from the region.
- **Latin America region:** Will not conduct the meeting due to challenging time zones.
- **North America and Caribbean region:** Will hold its regional meeting on the specific time slot.
- **Pacific region:** Already organised meeting to develop Pacific strategy. Will not use the time slot.
- **West Asia region:** Will organise meeting to discuss Quadrennial strategies.

Regional reports of the Quadrennium are shared with delegates of specific regions and will also be posted on ICEVI website.

Release of “Partnerships for Change” at the World Blindness Summit

It has been the attempt of the publication team of the ICEVI and the Overbrook International Program to summarise the impact created by The Nippon Foundation in shaping the lives of thousands of visually impaired individuals from the East Asia region. The publishing team headed by Larry Campbell who was instrumental in initiating both the Higher Education Project of ICEVI and the ON-NET technology projects of

Overbrook has gathered background information from mid-1990s and has come out with the publication under the title "Partnerships for Change." This publication outlines the historical evolution of the projects supported by The Nippon Foundation and also the country level impact created by their investment in this work. The publication includes more than 50 embedded videos that provide insight into the work of The Nippon Foundation in the seven project countries namely Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Mongolia. The book will be released at 10 AM GMT on 28 June 2021. Larry Campbell will provide an introduction to the work of the Overbrook International Program and ICEVI in the region leading to a twenty year partnership including the Higher Education Project. Two beneficiaries of the project will speak about their experience and the impact it has created on their lives. Following these remarks the first copy of the book will be presented to Mr Yohei Sasakawa, Chairman of The Nippon Foundation who will also deliver a special address. At the end of the session the book will be available for download on the websites of Overbrook School and ICEVI - www.osb.org and www.icevi.org

Thematic Webinars

One of the activities of the World Blindness Summit is conducting thematic webinars. 30 themes connected with the broad areas of education, employment, human rights and assistive devices have been selected by the International Organising Committee for webinars. Many of the ICEVI Executive Committee members will be moderating these academic presentations. We encourage you to register and make use of these webinars. The details of topics and timings can be accessed from the Summit website, www.worldblindnesssummit.com

ICEVI response to World Braille Council resolution

ICEVI is proud to launch its second publication addressing the inclusion of children with multiple disability and deafblindness. The first publication, launched in June 2020 and entitled "Include Me", highlighted the right to inclusion in family and community. This second publication addresses the importance of braille literacy and offers practical "tips" for how to introduce braille to children with multiple disability and deafblindness. The two publications have been released by ICEVI in response to a World Braille Council resolution in 2018, in which the Council undertook to collaborate with ICEVI and the World Braille Council to provide

educational support, including braille access, for children with multiple disability and deafblindness in developing countries.

The writing team consisted of Nandini Rawal, Vimal Thawani, S.R. Mittal, and Frances Gentle. ICEVI dedicates the publication to Mr Ajay Kumar (A.K.) Mittal, former Executive Member of ICEVI and Secretary General of World Blind Union. A braille user himself, A.K. was a strong advocate for the right to education and braille literacy for children with blindness, including those marginalised from education due to the nature of their disabilities.

Hope to meet you soon in person:

Thank you to our members and partners for your support of children and young people with visual impairment during this challenging time of a global pandemic. We hope this special issue of the E-News brings you closer to the ICEVI General Assembly. Although we will not be together in person due to the current health and travel restrictions, ICEVI plans to reconvene its face-to-face global and regional events when the pandemic situation improves. Until then, we wish you and your colleagues and loved ones a safe and healthy period ahead.

ICEVI E-News comes to your mailbox in twice every year. Please provide us with the e-mail addresses of individuals and organizations that may be interested in receiving the ICEVI E-News and The Educator.

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