



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



**ICEVI E-NEWS**

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## Message from the President

Dear friends and colleagues,

We hope you enjoy this February 2023 issue of the ICEVI E-News. During the intervening months since the last issue, members of the Executive Board held their first in-person meeting in the Netherlands in October 2022. The gap between the October 2019 and October 2022 in-person meetings marks the period of national lockdowns due to the arrival of the global COVID-19 pandemic in late 2019. The events described in this issue reflect the positive changes which have accompanied the pandemic, including changes in how we meet, communicate, teach, and deliver capacity building programs for children with vision impairment and the professionals and families that support them.

This issue includes information about the regional conferences of ICEVI West Asia (July 2023), ICEVI East Asia (September 2023), and ICEVI Africa (October 2023), together with information about the ICEVI World Conference (November 2024). The issue also introduces the global education campaign of Deafblind International promoting the right to education for children with deafblindness. ICEVI is a proud campaign partner and will make every effort to support information sharing and program delivery.

Many of you have come to know our CEO, Dr M.N.G. Mani, during the past 20+ years, first as Secretary General and then CEO of ICEVI. Mani will be retiring at the end of 2023, and we are pleased that he will continue as a member of the organizing committee for the 2024 World Conference. During the first half of 2023, the Executive Board is undertaking a strategic review of ICEVI. The review will be followed by decisions about the CEO role and any changes to the mission and structure of ICEVI as a result of the strategic review process.

In closing, we thank our members, partners and supporters around the world for their ongoing commitment to progressing the ICEVI Mission of equitable access to quality inclusive education for all children with visual impairment.



**Frances Gentle**  
President

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## **ICEVI Strategy Review Process**

The first strategic review of ICEVI was conducted in 2002 and subsequent reviews were made through deliberations of the ICEVI Executive Board in 2010 and 2017. With the growing changes in the disability sector, particularly in the field of visual impairment (VI), members of the Executive Board proposed to review the mission, values, goals and structure of ICEVI, to ensure the organisation continues its service as a key player in the VI education sector in the years ahead. Consequently the Executive Board recommended the conduct of a strategy review process with a professional facilitator during the first half of 2023.

The Principal Officers invited recommendations from ICEVI's international partner members regarding potential facilitators for the review process and selected Mr. Jonathan Dudding from the United Kingdom to undertake the review process. The terms of reference for the strategic review were fully defined in consultation with the Executive Board. The facilitator will conduct a series of online discussions with the ICEVI regional Presidents, Principal Officers, and International Partner Members of ICEVI. The facilitator will draw on the information gathered to prepare a working document outlining the recommended medium to long term purpose, direction and shape of the organisation, and any changes required to the mission, values and goals of ICEVI. The strategic review process is likely to be completed by July 2023 and the recommendations discussed and finalised through a combination of in-person and virtual meetings of the Executive Board. ICEVI is excited about this review process, which will define the priorities for the future and also propose a suitable organisational structure for promoting the realization of the right to equitable, inclusive quality education for children with blindness, low vision, deafblindness, and multiple disability. The ICEVI constituency will be updated with the outcomes of the review process in late 2023.

## **Reconvening the ICEVI World Conference in 2024**

The ICEVI Executive Board, during its in-person October 2022 meeting in the Netherlands, endorsed the proposal to reconvene the ICEVI World Conference. The Conference serves as a platform for sharing ideas, information and expertise in education of children and young people with blindness, low vision, deafblindness, and multiple disability. The Conference also serves as an entry point for organisations and individuals

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around the world to become ICEVI members. The Conference Bid Document was approved by the ICEVI Executive Board and shared globally in early November 2022. We are pleased to advise that the Blind People's Association (BPA), Ahmedabad India, submitted a bid for hosting the Conference, in partnership with Sense International India. The Conference will be offered in the hybrid modes of in-person and online, and the likely dates of the Conference will be 14-17 November 2024. An Agreement between ICEVI and BPA has been approved by the two organisations.

The 2024 World Conference will be the first full international conference of ICEVI since 2006, when the 12<sup>th</sup> World Conference was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The first announcement is expected to be released in early April 2023. ICEVI is looking forward to welcoming researchers, educators, health professionals, parents/caregivers, and other stakeholders in VI education from around the world. The Host Committee will take advantage of recent developments in accessible digital technologies to provide an accessible program for online and in-person delegates, with the majority of conference materials provided digitally and via a dedicated conference website.

More details of the Conference will be provided on the ICEVI website, [www.icevi.org](http://www.icevi.org), and through the dedicated conference website. Await further updates!

### **Retirement of Dr M.N.G. Mani, CEO of ICEVI**

It is with some sadness that we announce the planned retirement of Dr MNG Mani from the position of Chief Executive Officer of ICEVI on 31 December 2023. Dr Mani joined ICEVI on 2 July 2002 and is the first (and only) Secretary General/CEO of ICEVI. During his 21 years of continuous service, his dedication and initiatives have positively impacted on the lives of children with visual impairment, their families, and the professionals who support them.

The Governance Committee of ICEVI has commenced discussions on the future CEO position. It is anticipated that the ICEVI strategy review process will define the role of ICEVI in the blindness sector in the future and also the nature of the CEO position required to implement the goals and activities of ICEVI at the global level and in ICEVI's seven global

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regions. With all probability the new ICEVI CEO will be recruited by the end of December 2023. More information on the recruitment process, qualifications, expected job profile, etc., will be announced through the ICEVI website and its publications once the strategy review process is completed.

We wish to acknowledge the substantive contribution of Dr Mani to the mission and goals of ICEVI over two decades. His legacy will live on in the lives of individuals with vision impairment and their families, employers and communities.

## **Roll out of ICEVI Task Group Activities**

The strategic activities for the ICEVI 2021-2024 Quadrennium include formation of a number of task groups that address the priority areas in VI education, as identified by the regional Presidents of ICEVI and our International Partner Members. Of the 10 task group topics identified by members, the following five task groups commenced work in 2022:

**Advocacy/Influencing task group** – Facilitated by Andrew Griffiths (Sightsavers). The overall aim of this task group is to implement the ICEVI Global Advocacy Strategy. The strategy outlines overarching objectives and sub-objectives, and the task group will be asked to identify approaches, timescales and prioritisation of the sub-objectives.

**Gender Equality and Women’s Rights task group** – Facilitated by Ana Peláez (ONCE). The overall aim of this task group is to introduce gender equality as a principle in all ICEVI’s work, activities, structures, and procedures; and to promote the rights of women and girls with blindness, low vision, deafblindness and multiple disability in the context of education.

**Task group on Children’s Participation** – Facilitated by Ana Peláez (ONCE). The overall aim of this task group is to begin work on the constitution of a Children’s Council in each region. The task group will support the regional Presidents in their efforts to set up and monitor regional Children’s Councils. Once the regional councils are in place, a global Children’s Council will be created with the involvement of the Chair of each regional Children’s Council.

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**Technology in Education task group** – Facilitated by David Clarke (RNIB) in 2022, and Marcel Janssen (Royal Dutch Visio) in 2023. This task group will develop its overall aim in the coming months, with an emphasis on promoting the provision of accessible technology and training for school students with vision impairment.

**Deafblindness and Multiple Disability task group** – Facilitated by Mirko Baur. During the quadrennium, this task group will support the writing of “Include Me” publications promoting the rights of children with deafblindness and multiple disability.

The Facilitators have finalized the terms of reference for their groups and are in the process of recruiting members from within ICEVI and externally. The outputs of each task group will be determined by members of the group and may include position papers and capacity building of ICEVI members and partners. Any position papers developed by the task groups will reveal the stand of ICEVI on specific thematic areas in the global blindness sector, and will guide the selection of activities for implementation at regional and national levels of ICEVI. It is also anticipated that the task group members will organize specific concurrent sessions at the forthcoming World Conference of ICEVI in 2024 to share their expertise and recommendations with delegates.

ICEVI will be activating other task groups during 2023 and 2024 to address the identified priority areas of inclusive education, early childhood, low vision, parent participation and parent-professional partnerships, and climate change and humanitarian action.

## **World Braille Day Message**

Dr Frances Gentle, President ICEVI, issued a message acknowledging World Braille Day on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2023. This year’s World Braille Day marks the 213th anniversary of the birth of Louis Braille. World Braille Day celebrates the transformational power of braille in enabling children and young people with blindness and low vision to participate in education and reach their full potential.

ICEVI members and partners promote braille literacy as a human right, as reflected in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (articles 2, 21 and 24). ICEVI invites leaders, practitioners and parents/carers around the world to join us in promoting the teaching and



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learning of braille, the production of braille materials and “born accessible” publications, and the provision of low-cost braille reading and writing devices. Please visit the News Section of the ICEVI website [www.icevi.org](http://www.icevi.org) to access the full message.

Dr. Gentle has also invited members to support the efforts of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and the Accessible Books Consortium in promoting ratification of the Marrakesh Treaty by national governments. The Treaty addresses the “book famine” for touch readers by enabling the exchange of braille and other accessible books across international borders.

### East Asia Regional Conference

The ICEVI East Asia region will be holding its regional Conference on 18-21 September 2023 at the Royal Ambarrukmo Hotel, Yogyakarta, Jalan Laksda Adisucipto, Indonesia (E-mail: [info@royalambarrukmo.com](mailto:info@royalambarrukmo.com); Website: <https://www.royalambarrukmo.com>).

The Conference theme is **“Reasonable Accommodation and Accessibility in Education of Children with Visual Impairment”**. The program will include presentations on reasonable accommodations and accessibility, employment strategies in the blindness sector, higher education, the role of technology in the education and employment of people with visual impairment, development of youth with visual impairment, and the role of parents and organizations of people with disabilities in promoting and supporting the education, employment and advocacy of people with visual impairment.

The Call for Papers and the registration process have commenced and the details can be found on the homepage of the ICEVI website [www.icevi.org](http://www.icevi.org). We encourage you to take advantage of the early bird registration before 15 April 2023 and enjoy the academic ambience and hospitality of the East Asia Regional Conference.

### Regional Conference of the ICEVI Africa region

The ICEVI Africa Conference will be held on 10-12 October 2023 in Nairobi, Kenya. The theme of the Conference is **“Deploying digital technologies for quality and inclusive education for people with visual impairment in Africa”**.



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This inaugural ICEVI Africa Conference will bring together key stakeholders in the education and ICT sectors, including policy-makers, technology developers and suppliers, educational service providers, researchers, teachers, learners, and consumer representatives. The program will explore the increasing role of digital technologies in education and their deployment in enhancing access to quality and inclusive education for people with visual impairment in Africa.

Additional information on the Conference, including the Call for Papers, participant registration, program, Conference venue and rates, etc, will be published in the near future.

### **ICEVI West Asia Regional Conference 3-5 July, 2023**

After conducting a successful ICEVI West Asia Regional Conference in Kathmandu, Nepal on 16-18 February, 2020, ICEVI WA Region is planning to host next Regional Conference on 3-5 July, 2023. The salient features of this conference are:

1. It shall be conducted in Hybrid Mode with 3 face-to-face hubs in Ahmedabad in India, Kathmandu in Nepal and Dhaka in Bangladesh (yet to be confirmed).
2. Each hub shall invite 100 participants for in-person conference at these 3 locations.
3. The conference shall enrol 200 participants through virtual mode.
4. All 500 participants shall have access to all the sessions being conducted at one of these 3 hubs or through virtual mode.
5. The Question-Answer sessions shall be conducted through virtual chat method.
6. It shall be completely a "Green" conference. Thus enrolment of participants, selection of presenters, payment of registration fee, sharing of abstracts and final outcomes of the conference shall be shared through virtual means only.
7. Keep watching this website for further announcements, enrolment of participants and selection of speakers.

Kindly use email [iceviwestasia@gmail.com](mailto:iceviwestasia@gmail.com) for all correspondence.

All prospective participants and speakers may kindly block these dates in their calendars.

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## Deafblind International launches Global Campaign

Deafblind International (DbI) has launched a global campaign promoting the right to education for all children with deafblindness and children with related needs. Partner organizations for the campaign include ICEVI, the World Federation of the Deafblind, UNICEF, Perkins School for the Blind, CBM, and Sense International. The priority targets for the campaign are quality early childhood development and care, increased participation in pre-primary education, and free, equitable, quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes. DbI has released a YouTube video introducing the campaign - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7cdL16Y-pJA>.

ICEVI is represented on the global committee by ICEVI President, Dr Frances Gentle. Dr Gentle attended the first meeting of the global committee in Cairo, Egypt, on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2022. Committee members discussed the campaign's implementation, including priority global regions and countries, projects and networks, and key targets and timelines. ICEVI looks forward to contributing as a campaign partner and will keep you informed of the campaign's progress.

The global committee meeting took place in conjunction with the first Scientific Conference for Multiple Disabilities and Deafblindness in Egypt. On 27 and 28 November 2022. The conference was hosted by the Nida Society and attracted government members, education service providers, educators and other professionals, and families from across Egypt.

One outcome of the conference was the establishment of a working group on communication for Egyptian children with congenital deafblindness who are non-verbal. The working group is chaired by Mirko Baur, First Vice President of DbI, and members include Frances Gentle, representatives of the Nida Society, and disability stakeholders in Egypt.

## Vision Alliance Meeting

The Vision Alliance, a network of IAPB, ICEVI and the World Blind Union, is a powerful platform for advocacy. The Presidents and CEOs of the three organisations are planning to increase the present one-year tenure of the Chair of the Alliance to two years from 2023 onwards, as a means of ensuring continuity of joint initiatives. A meeting of the Vision Alliance is planned for early 2023 to discuss joint advocacy strategies and areas of

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common interest. Some of the recommendations of the ICEVI task groups will feature in the discussions of the Vision Alliance.

### **CBM – ICEVI Africa Region Multi-Year Plan**

During 2022, the ICEVI President and CEO facilitated meetings of the International Partner Members (IPMs) and the regional ICEVI Presidents and Boards. The purpose of the virtual meetings was to share regional priorities and to promote potential IPM-regional partnerships. We are pleased to report that CBM has taken this initiative forward with their interaction with the ICEVI Africa Regional Board to formulate multi-year capacity building project/s that address shared priorities of CBM and ICEVI Africa. Formal discussions are underway between CBM and the ICEVI Africa Regional Board, and the activities are anticipated to commence in 2023. ICEVI is looking forward to a productive collaboration with CBM for furthering the right to education for children with visual impairment across the vast Africa continent.

### **Regional Workshop on Mathematics**

A regional ICEVI workshop on Mathematics was organised in Jakarta, Indonesia on 15-17 November 2022 and was attended by nine mathematics professionals from Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. The training focussed on how effectively videos on mathematical concepts, prepared by ICEVI with the support of The Nippon Foundation, can be used to popularise studies in STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) at the secondary level.

As a follow-up of the Mathematics workshop, resource persons in the Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam will prepare video lessons for a number of selected mathematics concepts pertaining to primary, secondary and senior secondary levels during 2023. These materials will be prepared through national level workshops of these experts under the guidance of the ICEVI Project Director for higher education and the Country Coordinators.

At present the ICEVI Math Made Easy YouTube channel has 475 instructional videos on teaching mathematics that cover a wide range of topics in mathematics including the teaching of abacus. With the addition of at least 100 instructional videos by the project countries in 2023, ICEVI believes that the ICEVI Math Made Easy YouTube channel, which already

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has a subscription of nearly 3800 persons, will become a key resource for teaching mathematics to children with visual impairment worldwide.

## **Regional Youth Summit**

A Regional Youth Summit on **“Catalysing a Sustainable Future for People with Visual Disability”** was jointly organized by The Nippon Foundation, ICEVI, and the Resources for the Blind, Philippines in Manila on 3-4 December 2022. The Summit was held in conjunction with the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD).

The Summit was attended by 30 participants who are former graduates of the higher education project and currently employed in various organisations and industries. The participants were drawn from Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Mongolia.

The Summit covered the following broad topics: Empowering youth with disabilities: national and international perspectives, overcoming barriers in education, technology for empowerment, factors contributing to successful employment, how do we promote employment opportunities – perspectives of employees and employers, barriers – programmatic, physical, attitudinal, communication, social, and how the youth movement can be used as a vehicle to increase employment opportunities for persons with visual impairment.

The presenters included officials from The Nippon Foundation, ICEVI, government departments, employers, voluntary organisations, parents / carers, persons with visual impairment, and human resource development personnel.

In addition to formal presentations, the Summit included panel discussions and thematic group deliberations, which provided ample opportunities for the participants to interact and share experiences. The entire program was regulated by persons with visual impairment.

Taking positive lessons from this Youth Summit, the higher education project will hold a Regional Youth Summit consisting of about 70-80 employees and graduates with visual impairment drawn from these member countries in December 2023, in conjunction with the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD).

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The objective of the 2023 Summit will be to establish a strong Youth Network in the East Asia region with members advocating for the employment and empowerment of persons with visual impairment in the East Asia region and other regions around the world.

## **Collaboration with the World Blind Union**

ICEVI and the World Blind Union (WBU) have partnered to organize three consecutive joint General Assemblies in 2012, 2016 and 2021. These global events have strengthened collaboration and networking between the two organizations. At the conclusion of the 2021 Assembly, the Boards of WBU and ICEVI decided to conduct independent general assemblies for the current Quadrennium as a means of giving greater focus to the unique organisational priorities of their constituencies.

Diana Stentoft, WBU Secretary General, and Marc Workman, WBU CEO, attended the ICEVI Executive Board meeting in The Netherlands in October 2022. They emphasised the importance of collaboration and partnerships with ICEVI members across a range of areas relating to education for children and young people with visual impairment. The areas identified during the October 2022 meeting included promotion of education advocacy; reduction of barriers to accessibility, resources and training; promotion of the Marrakesh Treaty; increased collaboration on the WIPO Accessible Books Consortium, policy papers, shared messaging, and regional level collaboration.

As a starting point, ICEVI and WBU will bring together their regional Boards to discuss ways to strengthen collaboration and networking at regional levels. This will include a joint regional plan of action and related activities to promote national adoption of the WIPO Marrakesh Treaty in the seven world regions of ICEVI and WBU.

## **Call to Action: Disability inclusive education**

ICEVI has joined the [Call to Action](#) promoting disability inclusive education which was launched at the UN [Transforming Education Summit](#) held in New York in September 2022. The Call to Action (CTA) is led by the International Disability Alliance (IDA), the International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC), and the Global Campaign for Education. Its goals are to advance achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4

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towards ensuring access to quality, inclusive, safe education for all learners, including learners with disabilities, across the humanitarian-development continuum; and to encourage decision makers to continue building more disability-inclusive education systems.

The Call to Action highlights the 240 million children with disabilities worldwide who, even before COVID-19 disruptions to education, experienced disparities in learning. Compared to children without disabilities, children with disabilities were 49% more likely to have never attended school and 42% less likely to have foundational reading and numeracy skills (UNICEF, 2021).

To date, around 300 civil society, governments, multilateral institutions, and advocates from around the globe have added their voice to the Call to Action.

If your organisation would like to sign on to the Call to Action, go to <https://bit.ly/TES-CTA>.

## **Congratulations David, Ana and Getty**

ICEVI membership includes some of the most qualified and experienced leaders and professionals in the field of vision impairment globally. Many of the members of the global Executive Board hold positions of leadership in their own organisations and within their communities. Their achievements generally go unannounced in ICEVI publications. In this instance, we wish to acknowledge the following three members of the ICEVI Executive Board.

David Clarke is the Company Secretary of ICEVI and the RNIB representative on the ICEVI Executive Board. He has accepted the position of Chief Executive Officer of the British Paralympic Association and will be leaving RNIB and ICEVI in early March 2023. It is noteworthy that David represented Britain 144 times in blind football, scoring a record 128 goals in the process. He competed for Paralympics at the Beijing 2008 and London 2012 Paralympic Games and also in Goalball at Atlanta 1996. We congratulate David on his CEO appointment and his continued commitment to promoting sports among persons with disabilities in general and persons with visual impairment in particular.

Ana Peláez Narváez is the ONCE representative on the ICEVI Executive Board. In February 2023, Ana was elected as the new Chairperson of the

UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The CEDAW Committee was established by the UN in 1979 as a body of independent experts who monitor implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. CEDAW is the most important human rights treaty for women and consists of 23 independent experts on women's rights from around the world. In addition to her substantive commitments to ONCE and the CEDAW Committee, Ana Peláez is the Facilitator of the ICEVI Children's Participation Task Group and the Gender Equality and Women's Rights Task Group.

Gertrude Oforiwa Fefoame is the Sightsavers representative on the ICEVI Executive Board. Among her many leadership positions, she is President of ICEVI Africa. We wish to congratulate Gertrude (Getty) for her election as the Chair of the Committee that monitors implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Gertrude was first elected to the 18-member UNCRPD Committee in 2018 following nomination by the Government of Ghana. She will now serve on the Committee until 2026.

We wish David Clarke, Ana Peláez, and Gertrude Fefoame every success in their efforts to progress realization of the human rights of persons with disabilities.

**ICEVI E-News comes to your mailbox 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.**

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