

THE HIGHER EDUCATION NETWORK

Creating inclusive and welcoming university environments and open market employment opportunities for students with disabilities

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

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Presented by:



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

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Introduction

The year 2021 too was challenging as the adverse effects of the Covid 19 continued in the project countries to some extent. Though the restrictions imposed as a result of the pandemic continued in the early part of the year, things got better towards the end of the year enabling many countries to organise programs in the face-to-face mode.

The year 2021 was marked with three significant developments in the history of the higher education project. The first milestone was the publication of the book “**Partnerships for Change: National Strategies – Regional Collaboration**” that highlighted the impact created by The Nippon Foundation on the lives of persons with visual impairment in the East Asia region.

The book outlined the chronology of higher education programme since 2007 and carried out country related developments that made impact on the education, employment and overall empowerment of persons with visual impairment in Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos and Mongolia. The publication was jointly prepared by Larry Campbell, past president of ICEVI who was also the architect of the Higher Education Project in the East Asia region, Wenru Niu, International Program Director of the Overbrook School for the Blind and Mani M.N.G, CEO, ICEVI who is also serving as the Director of the Higher Education Project. The publication was released by Mr Yohei Sasakawa, Chairman of The Nippon Foundation at the virtual World Blindness Summit held on 28-30 June 2021 which was attended by more than 3000 participants from all over the world. It was a grand occasion when the international delegates came to know about the flagship higher education program of ICEVI supported by The Nippon Foundation. The print copies of the publication are being sent to various stakeholders. In addition to this the publication in E-Pub and other accessible formats is available for download from the ICEVI website www.icevi.org. An exclusive session on higher education was also organised as a part of the World Blindness Summit in which the coordinators of higher education program participated and shared their experience which was very much appreciated by the international audience.

The second highlight of the year 2021 was the attendance of over 300 persons with visual impairment, most of them the beneficiaries of the higher education project at the World Blindness Summit. The Nippon Foundation was kind enough to provide internet allowance for most of the participants from the higher education project countries and also provided assistive devices to Philippines, Vietnam and Indonesia to encourage more participants to take part in the Summit and also to make use of the devices for technology training in the future. The participants had a lot to share and some statements made by them are provided in the later part of this Annual Report.

In continuation of the publication “Partnerships for Change” ICEVI and The Nippon Foundation initiated the preparation of another publication entitled **“Transition to Employment - Experiences from Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam”** in late 2021 and this will be released in July 2022. This publication highlights three fundamental factors of the education and employment focusing on the importance of curriculum transaction in the areas of STEM (Science, Technology Engineering and Mathematics), need for the development of soft skills to facilitate employment and awareness to employers about the employability of persons with visual impairment. ICEVI believes that this publication too will make an impact on the services for persons with visual impairment.

With this introduction, we shall present the details of participation of visually impaired graduates in the World Blindness Summit and also country wise activity reports.

Participation in the WORLD BLINDNESS SUMMIT

A. List of Participants from the Project Countries

S. No.	Country	No. of Participants
1	Philippines	171
2	Indonesia	25
3	Vietnam	94
4	Cambodia	5
5	Myanmar	10
6	Laos	8
7	Mongolia	26
TOTAL		339

B. Impressions

PHILIPPINES

NIDA GRACE RABELISTA



Attending the blind summit, has made me realize a lot of things. First, I have learned that when dealing with multiple disability visual impaired individuals, it is very important to let them feel that they are included in the community. We should not limit them and we should allow them to explore their capabilities despite of their disability. And also communication is very important for the community around them to spread awareness that though MDVI individuals have different approach in doing things they are still abled and they can still live normally like most of the people do.

I have also learned that the technology has made it easier to make the learning materials accessible to the visually impaired individuals. Digital platforms such as Bookshare has made more educational books accessible for the students.

MICHAEL MORANO



In World Blind Summit I have a lots of learnings that I can apply in my daily life. Disability is not a barrier to continue the life. In a few days/nights even my sleep is not enough I think it so worth it, because my experience in World Blind Summit is different in my previous summit that I attend. In my experience in World Blind Summit I gained lots of knowledge, wherever I go I always bring this knowledge and I can share to others. Patience, diligence and determination is needed to become one of them. I'm so inspired to all the speakers what they shared. There's no words can describe my experience in World Blind summit. As mentioned, not only to the mining site and pawnshop we can see and we

can find a gold even in the World Blind Summit and in all the trainings of Resources For The Blind. We can't sale this gold and is not pawnable but the value of this is higher than dollar. Thank you very much World Blind Summit and Resources for the Blind.

INDONESIA

ABDUL HARIS SUAULO



There are several WBS seminars that can be attended including Global Technology & Accessibility, Domestic for blind people, Participation of people with disabilities and educators in the achievement of SDG 4, Inclusive Education. One of the seminar topics is Inclusive Education. In the material of this seminar, I learned a lot about the education of children with special needs, the interaction of a teacher, people with disabilities who can join other children at school or on campus. And even children with visual

impairments can be enabled to play the role of a teacher either for people with disabilities or for others.

HENDRA WIJAYA



First, I am very happy that I can participate in this meeting. I have attended the 5th training session. The theme is Youth Leadership from the training that I have attended, I am motivated, that we as persons with disabilities, especially the visually impaired, must adapt to the environment, be confident and willing to learn according to the skills we have. So that the knowledge that we have, can be the basic capital, when one day we are appointed to

be a leader.

VIETNAM

NGHIA NGUYEN

“I thank the organizers for allowing me to attend the World Blindness Summit. This is really the place for the voices of the visually impaired to be heard. I am a blind student studying Sociology at Van Lang University. I will strive to study and work more so that in the future I can also attend these conferences not only as a participant but also as a speaker.”

XUAN LINH

“I am low vision and currently a third-year student of Special Education department of Pedagogy University. The knowledge I learned at school is still mainly from books. And the information I learned from the WBS forum is very practical sharing with specific project activities. I hope that my school will also have many practical activities and projects for students with disabilities to participate in so that they have more practical and effective specialized skills. Sincere thanks to Sao Mai and the organizers for helping us with internet costs to participate in online activities like this.”

CAMBODIA

Savat SOK and Chinda MIN

“More than 4 thousand people with and without disabilities from 190 countries were participated including some huge companies’ representatives from Microsoft, Facebook, google, Amazon etc. There were five participants with visual disabilities from Cambodia including Chinda Min, Sokvat Van, Sengoun Heng, Borey Sun and Gnim Sinat. There were eight consecutive sessions, which were divided in four different topics respectively.

Accessible technology for users who are blind and visually impaired:

Accessibility check is used to access within outlook email, Seeing AI is an application for Android using for seeing around the users’ houses or when walking, Soundscape is an application for IOS using for moving around the area, Alexa is an application using to help blind users, Autotext is to illustrate images and is available within Facebook. There are many kinds of sports that people with visual impairment or blindness have been playing such as football, goalball, running, swimming, hockey, etc. According to the speakers, those kinds of

sports help them a lot mentally and physically. They are able to think faster, be flexible and make them energized. Apart from sports, they even play cards, chess, video games and toys.

MYANMAR

Reflections from the Participants:

- All are very pleased to have this event during the pandemic period for the technology advancing to overcome the barrier of lockdown. Highly appreciate the organizers to make this real. Easy to access the conference with limited internet connection.
- From employment opportunity sections, we were inspired by the words, “*sell your talent through internet.*” We learned how VI persons in other countries are preparing to catch job opportunity.
- In Women’s affair section, we could learn more about women’s rights. We learned that there are organizations that represent VI Women in other countries.
- It is a great opportunity for us to be able to participate in the general assembly of world organization because of launching through online. We noticed some board members and officers are changed. ICEVI treasurer is changed but the former president continues leading us for the next term.

LAOS

Lessons-learned from WBS conferences

WBS was very important conference for persons with disabilities worldwide and there were great presenters from worldwide as well as to share valuable experiences and demonstrate assistive technologies to:



- Use for travelling for totally blind, low vision, deaf and mute people,
- Had understood the persons with disabilities be employed,
- Role of persons with disabilities in community participation, and public awareness for social inclusion and including in widely accepting roles of persons with disabilities in high level.

MONGOLIA

The country project coordinator Ms. Gerel Dondovdorj is also the contact person of the World Blind Union from Mongolia. The Higher Education graduates and other visually impaired individuals were encouraged to take part in the World Blindness Summit. It is evident that many have attended while some could not due to the different time zones. Those who attended were supported from the Higher Education Project in terms of accessibility, internet etc., and therefore no specific request was made to avail the internet allowance.

Discussions with the participants revealed that they have appreciated the World Blindness Summit and were looking forward to listening to the recordings of various webinars and technical sessions organized at the summit.



COUNTRY REPORTS

I. Activities organized during the period

1. Produced and updated 2,570 accessible book titles to Sao Mai online library. The library now has over 7,000 academic titles.
2. Conducted the following Online training programs via Zoom and Google Meet:
 - 6 trainings on computer skills benefitting 78 students.
 - 2 one-week online training courses for 29 graduate students about internet-based job orientation and online sales.
 - 4 six days online trainings (one day per week) for total of 41 fourth-year students about preparation for employment.
 - 12 one-day online training workshops on how to use Mobile devices for learning for total of 112 participants.
 - 4 one-day online job orientation workshops for total of 67 high-school visually impaired students.
 - 2 one-week trainings for 19 colleagues from 11 organizations/schools for/of the blind in Vietnam to produce accessible academic materials with Sao Mai Braille software and DAISY's book production tools.
 - 3 one-day online training workshop on preparation for university entrance for total of 36 visually impaired.
 - 7 online training workshops for total of 83 visually impaired participants, focusing on soft skills and independent living skills, especially how to effectively adapt to the Covid-19 pandemic.
3. Continued to provide technical accessibility and accessible materials production trainings / consultation support for total of 39 faculties from 14 different universities.
4. Continued to collaborate with UNDP Vietnam to organize online seminars to raise awareness about the CRPD, Marrakesh Treaty and Vietnam law for people with disabilities.



5. Successfully referred and provided job placement for 11 visually impaired graduated students: three persons working at OneFix online marketing company, five at Vina Cacao company and three at the Saigon technology institute. All are employed to work from home during the pandemic situation.
6. Developed and published one online commercial platform for visually impaired business owners to freely open online shops and promote their products and services. By the end of December 2021, Sao Mai has supported first 50 VI business owners, in which there are 23 persons who were graduated students from previous years and now are running their own businesses.
7. Supported the disability service center in Lao PDR DSC, Mr. AikeoKoomanivong, to develop the Braille translation table for Lao language.
8. Continued to work with both DAISY Consortium and the Accessible Books Consortium to improve Sao Mai softwares and cross-border books exchange program. In 2021, we have hundreds of exchanged book titles between Sao Mai library with others such as NLS from the US, Vision Australia, CNIB foundation.

II. Details of beneficiaries from the program during the financial year from the Project Partner Organizations

Around 25 visually impaired Staff (15 male and 10 female beneficiaries) and 62 students from project's partner organizations were offered the program. 30 students (22 female and 8 male) were additionally enrolled for the training and 11 individuals were assisted with securing employment opportunities.

III. Names of the training programs organized during the year and the persons benefitted (teachers, parents, students, others, etc.)

No.	Training topic	Targeted beneficiaries	Number of trainees
1	Computer trainings	High school and first-year students	78
2	Job trainings	Graduated students	29
3	Preparation for employment	Third and fourth year students	41
4	Utilizing Mobil apps for education	Students	112
5	Job orientation	High school students	67
6	Providing support services for blind students	Organization staff	19
7	Technical support	University faculties	39
8	University entrance and orientation	High school and first-year students	36
9	Soft skills	University students	83
10	Policies and laws for PWDs	Students, faculties, leaders and administrators	475 viewers

I. Activities organized during the period

A. Virtual Computer Course

As we all realized during the pandemic situation that acquiring skill in using computer technology has become very essential, Virtual Computer Course on Microsoft Office was conducted for High School Students with VI. It had helped 10 students from various provinces in Indonesia. Participants were not only from grade XII, but also from grade XI; They came from provinces of Riau, Jambi, South Sumatra, Lampung and South Kalimantan. Pertuni served them with loan-based computer service.

B. Virtual University Preparation Session for Grade XII Students with Visual Impairment

Pertuni found that job vacancy that requires skill on communication, writing, research, or application in technical engineering was quite often opened for persons with disabilities. Hence the Virtual University preparation session was conducted to provide insight for grade XII students on subjects to be taken in university that might have more future career opportunity.

C. Developed Network with Government body in Employment Sector

Below are activities that we conducted on “networking with government” during the last six month of the project period in 2021:

1. *Participated in focus group discussion conducted by The Ministry of National Development plan on October 20th. The discussion topic was about the Ministry plan to develop “inclusive Job Center”.*
2. *Fulfilled request of National Coalition of Disabled People Organization to share resource person within a webinar that discussed challenges faced by persons with disabilities.*
3. *Monitored the process of establishment of Disability Service Unit on employment sector which was mandated by The Law of Disabled Persons. The establishment process was under responsibility of The Ministry of Man Power.*
4. *Developed constructive communication with The Directorate of Domestic Employee Placement, that was under The Ministry of Man Power.*

D. Pioneer Virtual Job Fair

In the second semester of this project period, we conducted virtual job fair. This activity was the follow up action of employer orientation that we conducted in the previous semester.

E. Conducted Creative Writing Training

Pertuni conducted “creative writing training” for university students as well as university fresh graduates with visual impairment. This introduced career opportunities which needed writing skill as the main skill and provided basic writing skill for preparing to become journalist as well as content writer. Among the 10 participants, we had 7 people who finished all the training requirement.

F. Conducted Virtual Pre-Employment Soft Skill Training

Pre-employment soft skill training has been one of Higher Education Project activities which have been conducted every year since 2015. For this project period, we had 18 participants, who came from several part of Indonesia.

G. Produced Video Documentation on Employment for PVI

In the second semester of 2021, Pertuni produced one video on employment of person with visual impairment. This video had added the three videos that we produced in the first semester of 2021 project period about the achievements of three visually impaired persons working in different fields and the forth video was telling the story of Pre-Employment Soft Skill Training alumni who worked as “field vocal point” for a project which was funded by USAID and was implemented by their local partner – Mitra Kunci. This video informed to the public that working in a private non-profit oriented organization may become better job opportunity for persons with visual impairment in Indonesia.

II. Case Studies and Testimony

Salma Rahma Sari

Salma has just graduated from Institute of Islam, majored in Islam education. The reason why she participated in Higher Education Project Pre Employment Soft Skill Training was because she was willing to prepare herself to be more ready to enter inclusive job market.

“I am very glad that I have the opportunity to participate in this kind of training. It’s very useful for me. Now I realize and understand the difference between job and career; The importance of having good knowledge, skill and attitude (KSA) to develop my competence; The importance of knowing myself, having SMART goal, develop action plan to reach the goal, and have good time management skill to make sure that we focus in reaching our dream.”

I. Executive Summary

Since 2020, there are 55 students with visual impairment who are enrolled in different colleges and universities nationwide. Thanks to ICEVI, TNF and RBI for continuing to support the higher education program for students with visual impairment in the Philippines. Following were the activities implemented from June 1, 2021 to December 31, 2021.

II. Programs Implemented

1. Employment skills development for persons with visual impairment

A. Writing Workshop

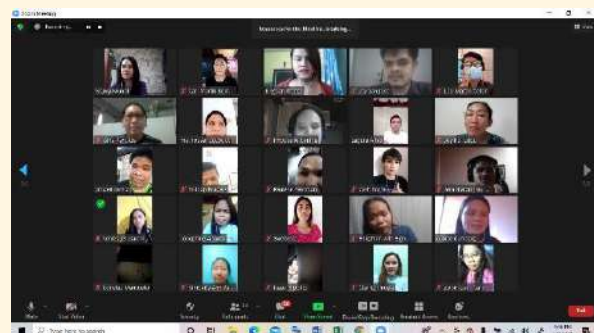
a) The Professional and Business Letter Writing was conducted online and attended by 24 students and graduates with visual impairment.



b) The Basic Research Writing was held on November 15-18, 2021 via Zoom with Mike Daryl Ocol as the resource speaker. It was attended by 20 college students with visual impairment.

B. Speak Networking / English Proficiency Training

This training was conducted in two batches. The first one was held on August 30 - September 3, 2021 with 34 blind and visually impaired higher education students and young professionals participating. The second batch was held on September 20 – 24, 2021 with 28 participants.



C. Multi and Social Media Training

On August 16-20, 2021, astounding training was conducted by RBI, entitled “Vlogging for Students and young professionals with Visual Impairment”.

2. Professional and Non-professional Development / Enhancement Training for Bachelor of Elementary and Secondary Education Students and Teachers with Visual Impairment

a. Training Focused on Assistive Technology particularly those which are useful in Teaching

On August 23-27, 2021, RBI conducted a training focused on assistive technology to 24 teachers who are currently employed with the Department of Education and with some teachers from colleges and universities. In this training, the participants were able to use the different online platforms in creating, managing, and delivering lesson for their students.

b. Becoming a Teacher: Skills Development Training for Students with Visual Impairment

The training on Becoming a Teacher: Skills Development Training for Visual Impairment was attended by 36 students and teachers with Visual Impairment.

3. Soft Skills Training for Students and Graduates with Visual Impairment

There were two batches and two modes of soft skills training for this year. One was the online training in partnership with IBM Philippines through the IBM SkillsBuild online portal and the face-to-face training in Mindanao regions.



4. Orientation Program for Employers

There were three events organized in the orientation program for employers.

a. JP Morgan Chase and Company conducted this activity to help persons with visual impairment to get ready with the career they want to pursue.

- b. Two-day seminar called “Employment Opportunities and Inclusion during the Pandemic” on the 21st and 22nd of July 2021 with 70 participants.
- c. Employment Forum for Persons with Visual Impairment, conducted face to face, was held on November 23-24, 2021 in Davao City with 41 participants and on November 26-27, 2021 in Cebu City with 76 participants.

5. Activities Leading to Influencing Legislative Measures

It is an honor to start mediating with various government and private agencies, colleges and universities in the Philippines to have training regarding Audio Description (AD). To start this initiative, RBI partnered with an international pioneer in the field of audio description, Dr. Joel Snyder to lead the 5-day training on September 27 – October 1, 2021 with 34 participants.

6. Networking Activities with partner Agencies

- a) RBI, with Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), a government agency, conducted raining on Audacity and Video Editing for Visual Impairment last July 12-20, 2021 and it was attended by 22 participants.
- b) On December 22, 2021 to January 17, 2022, another training was conducted in partnership with Amazing Grace Technical Training Institute, Inc., a TESDA accredited school. The training was entitled “Contact Center Services National Certificate II” which was participated by 19 adults with visual impairment who wish to enter employment with a BPO industry.

7. YAP Developing Visionary and Active Leaders 2021

On December 18-19, 2021, RBI convened the Country Champions Program for this year. The event aimed to build visionary leaders who are committed to participate in the advocacy of promoting the interest of the youth with visual impairment in the country.



During the period 2020-21, MNFB implemented the following activities:

1. Equipment for student use

We purchased 3 laptops and 1 PC - laptops for those 3 students who have enrolled in universities in 2021 and PC for the student support/resource center of the MNFB building. Students from the vocational training center were using the PC.

2. Establishment of the resource center

Under this activity we purchased 2 braille displays / Seika and installed them at the resource center of the MNFB building to serve the students.

3. Orientation program for employers/ Website development highlighting resources about blindness and how to create an accessible job place with reasonable accommodation

3.1. Orientation program for employers

Under the orientation program for employers, the workshop on the possibility to hire visually impaired person and how to create reasonable accommodation for visually impaired employees at work places was conducted on 12 November 2021 at the Bishrelt hotel and a total of 39 participants who were public officials from various Government agencies attended.

3.2 Website development highlighting resources about blindness and how to create an accessible job place with reasonable accommodation for the blind

Under this work, we hired an external expert who has a team to develop website and produce documents with information on given topics. That expert together with his team revised our website and made some development work at the MNFB existing website. We expect that developed resources will be toolkits for employers to gain understanding on how to employ blind persons and create an inclusive work place.

4. Employment skills training for persons who are visually impaired

A total of 6 visually impaired job seekers have been selected among 21 visually impaired persons. We assessed their qualifications and have made a career development plan for each of them. Based on the assessment, they have been receiving different trainings including computer, orientation and mobility et as well as some job preparedness training such as communication skills, team management, time management, how to prepare CVs and job interview, characteristics of highly productive employees etc.

5. Networking activities with the government bodies

Under this activity, we organized 2 series of discussions on the topic of employment of visually impaired persons. Representatives from the Government departments participated. During the discussion, we raised issues to improve employment opportunity of visually impaired persons through the National program to promote employment of persons with disabilities approved by the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, Mongolia. The issues were:

- ▲ the possibility to provide comprehensive support for persons with disabilities to work in open labor market and provide appropriate funding for each support;
- ▲ the possibility of getting a financial loan of up to 100 million MNT from the employment support fund;
- ▲ the possibility of increasing the government financial support for vocational training center of the MNFB;
- ▲ the possibility of the creation of vocational rehabilitation for visually impaired persons;

As the result of these discussions, the ministry authorities accepted some of our suggestions and agreed reflect them in the national program to promote employment of persons with disabilities. For instance, it was agreed that funding will be allocated to the implementation of the provision of 18.3 of the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

6. Country champion program

Under the country champion program, MNFB conducted 2-days workshop for visually impaired youth in 20-21 December 2021. The main theme was no one left behind and sub theme was “information accessibility, right to employment and education of blind persons. A total of 46 youth with blindness and low vision participated.

7. Workshop/Training on inclusive education for children with visually impairment and teaching mathematic

MNFB received a grant to translate *Mathematics Made Easy for Children with Visually Impairment* to Mongolian from the Ministry of Education. We carried out this work in cooperation with Math and computer science faculty teachers of the Mongolian university of education between May and August 2021. Under this activity, first 30 math videos were translated in to Mongolian. We conducted a workshop/training on inclusive education for blind children and teaching mathematics, on 10 September 2021.



8. Documentation of case studies of higher education students

TV content on employment of visually impaired person and blind students and their study in university was produced. In the program, Ochirbat, who is work in mainstream school as a music teacher gave an interview on how he is working in that school and teaching music to sighted students. Also, director of the school talked about how Ochirbat successfully works in the school. Moreover, Uuganbaatar who has enrolled to university in 2021, gave speech about his study and how he uses computer with screen reader software for his study. The program was broadcasted on 2 TV channels and posted to the MNFB website.



I. Report Content in Brief

In 2021, Inclusive Education Division or IED received first installment budget 2021 from ICEVI-TNF Project totaling \$12,000 out of the grant amount of \$21,804. This budget was allocated to some necessary activities which began with providing learning materials through production of accessible files (soft files) in word format, braille and audio books. In addition, the first instalment budget was also allocated to organize internship activity and soft skill training for students with visual impairment who will be ready for employment opportunities.

II. Details of Activity Implementation in 2021

A. Learning Material Production

Even though students with visual impairment possess individual assistive technologies for their learning, producing learning materials in accessible format or soft files in word format was required because blind students still faced difficulties to access books in Lao versions. In 2021, IED has completed almost 2,800 pages of 10 book titles (braille books) and 7 audio book titles (Daisy) and they were collected from faculties where students with visual impairment are studying in.

B. Internship Activity

Internship Activity is one of the most important activities for students with visual impairment who just completed their studies at NUoL and preparing to be ready for job application. This activity was conducted in a 3-month period between 1st September and 31st November 2021.

1. Job Skill Training Activity

The Job Skill Training for the students was conducted with the following objectives and the outcome of the activity are also listed below:

Objective:

- *To help graduated students understand about social working skills of persons with disabilities (Human interaction and communication skill in workplaces),*
- *To use IT skills for job application,*
- *How to note and write report of internship activity.*

After Training

- *All participants were able to depict understanding about social skills in workplaces and they could demonstrate soft skill in the internship sites,*
- *All participants were able to look for jobs and apply for them online,*
- *All participants were able to complete application, write report forms in English and were able to write reports.*

2. Internship site

Before doing internship, organizer of the internship activity had to contact the coordinators of the internship sites through online platforms (WhatsApp and Google Meet) to discuss the possible acceptance in the areas and here are 4 internship sites in Vientiane Capital:

1. *Lao Disabled People Association (LDPA),*
2. *Disability Service Center (DSC),*
3. *Department of Sports for the Disabled People, Physical Education and Arts in the Ministry of Education and Sports,*
4. *Visually Impaired School - Ministry of Public Health.*

3. Procedures of Internship Activity

Before this activity could begin, committee who are responsible for this activity were organized and then proposed for approval from the president of NUoL. Then IED made contacts to the internship sites where they could accept documents and provide facilities during the graduated students with visual impairment to do the practicum.

4. Conclusion

Internship activity offered a great opportunity for graduated students with visual impairment who could expect to learn experiences with people from workplace and this activity also promoted employment of persons with disabilities in organizations.

C. Equipment for students use and maintenance

Purchasing desktop computers for IED is still in need for providing facilities for students with visual impairment who can come and use for searching information from internet. In addition, desktop computers use a database for blind learning. In 2021, 3 desktop computers were purchased and some computers were reinstalled.



During the year 2021, the Academic and Career Counselling (ACC) program supported 134 visually-impaired students or young adults (47 girls) through individual or collective counselling sessions and follow-up exchanges.

I. Activities organized during the period

A. Individual / Collective Sessions and follow up

During the reporting period, the ACC officer conducted 29 collective and 24 individual follow-up sessions for students from the Special High Schools, university students, and young adults already working who are still followed-up under ACC program. Because of the Covid-19 situation, most of the follow-up sessions were done by phone calls and direct messages

B. World Blindness Summit

The World Blindness Summit (WBS) of the World Blind Union and ICEVI was held on 28-30 June 2021 in virtual format. Over 4000 people around the world registered and 30 different topics were raised, including accessibility, technology-based practices, understanding of disability-rights, private and public sector partnership, employment, higher education. The main message given throughout the summit was to empower people with visual impairment around the world so that they take their future in their own hands.

Thanks to ICEVI's generosity for five students with visual impairment from the project were able to attend and M. CHOUR Darong, Krousar Thmey's executive director was invited as a delegate representing Cambodia

C. Visit Support to Resource Centre in Kampong Cham Province

During the reporting period, one staff from NISE conducted one session to visit resource center at university in Kampong Cham province. The visit aimed to understand situation of center during the pandemic period. It was remarked that university adapted the lecturing method by holding the practice of distance learning to all students. So, the resource centre was kept closed without any service during this time. However, the university also keeps maintaining the center in good condition and expect to run its service again whenever it is allowed to do in-person lecturing.

D. Capacity Building to NISE staff and Student

i) Capacity building to NISE staff

One training session was organized for 6 staff (1 woman) from NISE regarding how to develop "Soft Skill training curriculum/manual for youth with disabilities" by professional trainer from University of YARSI, Indonesia.

ii) Soft skill training to student with visual impairment

3 sessions were organized for students with visual impairment. The first 2 sessions were done from distance (online – Zoom) facilitated by NISE team, with participation of total 14 students (4 women) from special high school in Phnom Penh. The last training session was organized in-person. There were 23 students with visual impairment (6 girls) who attended the training organized in Siem Reap province provided by professional trainer.

iii) Pre-employment training to student with visual impairment

One training focusing on "pre-employment" subject was organized for 21 students (6 girls) via online method. The training aimed at giving those students at higher education a good preparation for future employment, which also included content of self-development to become good employee, work habit, and time management

E. Orientation Program For Employers

One meeting was organized with relevant employers (private companies, local NGOs) in order to raise awareness on job opportunity for person with visual or hearing impairment. There was a total of 24 participants (10 women) which comprised of representatives from private companies and NGOs. There was also a former student with visual impairment joining this meeting to share his own experience in dealing with working environment.

F. Networking activities with Government bodies

During the reporting period, some face-to-face and online meetings with National Employment Agency (NEA) and its partner companies were organized with aim at improving employment network and increasing access to job opportunity for student with disabilities. Through cooperation with NEA, some students with disabilities were able to involve in job fair and to perform job interview. Besides, NISE also conducted some sessions of meeting with Disability Action Council (DAC) to discuss in finding way to support employment access to person with disabilities as well as to discuss on preparation of National forum on Employment for person with disabilities.

As a result, one National forum on employment for person with disabilities (PwD) was conducted in Phnom Penh as organized by Ministry of Social Affairs with co-facilitation by NISE and its NGO partners. In total, there were 160 participants, which comprised of representatives from NGOs, private companies, and public sector. The forum aimed at strengthening the cooperation among stakeholders as well as to give opportunity for both employers to share their job opportunity and for employees especially person with disabilities to share their experience in employment place. Ministry also encouraged employers to give better access on employment opportunity to person with disabilities.

G. Production of video case story

Regardless of the difficult situation, the project team still managed to produce one case story video of 2 students with visual impairment to show their challenges in distance (online) learning, experience gained, and their own view regarding learning from distance.

II. Testimonies of students from World Blind Summit

Borey SUN, Sengoun HENG and Sinat YEOM

"I am so honored to have participated in The World Blindness Summit which was held on June 28-30 2021, hosted in Spain through an online conference. Although the blindness Summit organized by the online, there are more people registered to participate in the meeting from around the world. Within 3 days of the World Blindness Summit, they have organized many topics related to blindness and development have been prepared and shared by famous speakers from around the world. These are all very interesting topics and one of the key to the development the field of blindness in Cambodia for the future. In this World Blindness Summit, I received a lot of important information related to the technology of development of the field of blindness and the situation of blindness in various countries."

Savat SOK and Chinda MIN

"I am so pleased to have attended such a huge event. Through the summit, I could hear many inspired words from potential people who are blind and visually impaired. They have countless experiences of fighting for the better. Most of them graduated from higher degrees and be employed. When having heard their presentation, I am motivated and do want to see such that strong people in Cambodia. Through the global event, there were also a number of significant messages from organization for people with disabilities (OPD) and various famous companies. Those encouraged words were really helpful for me to continue advocating energetically for the better in my nation."



Strategies for the future

ICEVI and the project partners of the higher education are fully convinced that the initiative on higher education has taken deep roots in the education system of the countries and therefore its expansion is inevitable. This has been the vision of the higher education project since its inception that the programme should be sustainable and get absorbed in the mainstream education system. With the introduction of decrees on higher education and appropriate legislations, higher education for persons with visual impairment has come to stay and we are sure it will continue to benefit scores of persons with visual impairment going forward.

The focus of the ICEVI higher education project is certainly shifting to issues relating to employment as this is one of the vital areas of concern of the international communities too. The project is hopeful of addressing key issues on employment in the ensuing years through collaboration with our project partners.

In our future work with such an endeavour, the following key issues deserve more in-depth investigation and analysis.

1. Exploring important internal factors impeding gainful employment of persons with visual impairment.
2. Identification of most important external factors contributing to the limited use of blind or low vision employees.
3. Strategies to help potential employers address and change the current situation.
4. Listing out resources, individual and collective, that are already working in the employment sector.
5. Exploration of the major gaps to reduce attrition from job placement.

ICEVI is grateful to The Nippon Foundation for supporting the higher education project that has certainly made a positive impact on the lives of persons with visual impairment. ICEVI also places on record its gratitude to the project partners and hundreds of visually impaired individuals for their commitment in leading from the front.

Partner Organisations



Krousar Thmey
Cambodia
www.krousar-thmey.org



Resources for the Blind, Inc., (RBI)
Philippines
www.blind.org.ph



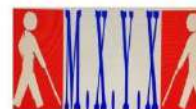
Pertuni
(Indonesian Blind Union)
Indonesia
<https://pertuni.or.id>



Sao Mai Vocational & Assistive
Technology Center for the Blind
Vietnam
www.saomaicenter.org



National University of Laos (NUOL)
Lao PDR
www.nuol.edu.la



Mongolian National Federation
of the Blind (MNFB)
Mongolia
www.mnfb.mn

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