ICEVI E-News

March 2026

www.icevi.org

Contents

Message from the President of ICEVI 4

Message from The Editor, ICEVI Publications Committee 5

ICEVI Executive Board, 2025-2028 6

International Partner Members 6

Organisational Members 6

Network Partners 6

Update: Joint ICEVI–WBU Global Braille Literacy Campaign 7

Updates: Three Focus Areas of the campaign and how you can assist 8

Focus Area 1: Advocacy and Media 8

Focus Area 2: Information Resources – Progress Update 11

Focus Area 3: Research – Progress Update 13

With thanks to our campaign Sponsors 16

Diamond Sponsor – HumanWare 16

Platinum Sponsor - Dot Inc 16

Platinum Sponsor – CBM International 16

Gold Sponsor – South Pacific Educators in Vision Impairment (SPEVI Inc) 17

Silver Sponsor – Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) 17

News from the ICEVI regions 17

Strengthening Regional Engagement: Meeting of ICEVI and WBU Regional Presidents 17

Africa Region 18

Mr Martin Kieti, Secretary-General, ICEVI Africa 18

Announcing the 2nd Africa Regional Conference, 2026 19

East Asia Region 20

Mr Silatul Rahim Dahman, President, ICEVI East Asia 20

West Asia Region 22

Dr Birendra Raj Pokharel, President ICEVI West Asia 22

North America and Caribbean Region 23

Dr Mike Bina, President, ICEVI North America/Caribbean Region 23

Latin America Region 23

Ms Gladys Correa, President, ICEVI Latin America Region 23

Other Braille Related News 25
More Than Just a Reading System..... 25
Nicholas Hoekstra 25
Statement of the World Intellectual Property Organization 28
34th Session of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Geneva, March 9, 2026..... 28
Call for Submissions: *The Educator* – July 2026 Issue..... 31
Contact Us..... 33

Message from the President of ICEVI

Dear Reader,

Warm greetings from the International Council for the Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI). It's amazing in such a short period of time from embarking on the New Year 2026 with our kicking off celebrations of the 200th anniversary of Louise Braille's creation of his tactile code, how much our members and networks have accomplished. By reading this March E-News demonstrates how ICEVI is impacting advancements for children and individuals who are blind, visually impaired and deafblind towards inclusive education at all levels; locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. This is only possible with our partnerships globally and from all sectors. This is necessary as we know in many countries, children and adults who are blind or deafblind do not have the opportunity to learn Braille at school or go to school. Adults lack access to Braille materials, and educators often do not receive the training or resources they need to support Braille Literacy. As you will see, ICEVI has enlisted support with International and Regional organizations representing our seven regions Africa, West Asia, East Asia, Europe, Latin America, North America & the Caribbean and Pacific from developing and developed countries. Our work is also built on collaboration with vital contributions from the community of individuals, educators, researchers, families and blind adults who help shape our programs through their knowledge, leadership and lived experiences.

All together having the goal to reach the most vulnerable population of children and adults who are blind or deafblind to have access to education and Braille Literacy which ties into Sustainable Development. Action oriented partnerships are a driving force to meet Sustainable Goals. Through meaningful, action oriented collaborative diverse partnerships we create a driving force of change to reach Sustainable Goals for the long term. Partnerships rooted in trust and passion create the synergy of the sharing of human and financial resources that contribute to sustainability along with the building of capacity at the local, and regional levels for the long term.

I extend my thanks to all contributors for your valuable articles and reports. A special thanks to Frances Gentle, ICEVI Past President and Santosh Kumar Rungta, President of WBU, Co-Chairs of the Global Braille Literacy Campaign, for their strong leadership.

Thank you all for your continued commitment to our shared mission.

Warm regards,

Ms. Susan LaVenture

President, ICEVI

Message from The Editor, ICEVI Publications Committee

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

It is my pleasure to present the March 2026 issue of *ICEVI E-News*. This edition reflects the strong momentum and growing global engagement surrounding the *More Braille: More Empowerment* Global Braille Literacy Campaign, a joint initiative of ICEVI and the World Blind Union. A central feature of this issue is a comprehensive update on the campaign, including the work of the three Focus Areas: Advocacy and Media, Information Resources, and Research. These updates highlight both the significant progress achieved in recent months and the many opportunities for collaboration and contribution. Importantly, we have also included practical guidance on how supporters around the world can become actively involved in advancing the work of each Focus Area.

We are especially pleased to acknowledge the generous support of our campaign sponsors: HumanWare, Dot Inc, CBM International, SPEVI, and CNIB. Their commitment is helping to drive this global effort forward.

This issue also reflects ICEVI's continued emphasis on regional engagement. We highlight the upcoming meeting of ICEVI and WBU Regional Presidents, an important step in ensuring that the global campaign is meaningfully implemented within diverse regional contexts. In addition, we are delighted to share updates and news from across ICEVI regions, demonstrating the breadth and richness of initiatives underway worldwide.

Beyond the campaign, this issue includes thought-provoking contributions on braille and accessibility, including an article by Nicholas Hoekstra and a significant statement from the World Intellectual Property Organization presented at the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Geneva. These contributions reinforce the vital role of braille literacy within broader human rights contexts.

On behalf of the ICEVI Publications Committee, I invite you to contribute to the July 2026 issue of *The Educator*, which will focus on the theme of "Technology and Artificial Intelligence in the Education and Daily Life of Persons with Visual Impairment". We encourage submissions from researchers, practitioners, families, and organisations across our global network.

As always, we thank you for your ongoing commitment to improving educational opportunities and life outcomes for children and young people with blindness, deafblindness and low vision. We hope this issue informs, inspires, and encourages your continued engagement with our shared work.

Frances Gentle,

Editor, ICEVI Publications Committee

ICEVI Executive Board, 2025-2028

Susan LaVenture –President

Akhil Paul –Vice President

Frances Gentle – Past President

Praveena Sukhraj-Ely – Treasurer

Ana Peláez – ONCE (Spanish National Organization of the Blind)

Todd Reeves – Overbrook School for the Blind

Samuel Foulkes – Clovernook Center for the Blind

Hubert Perfler – World Blind Union

Komivi Ayassou – President, ICEVI Africa

Silatul Rahim Bin Dahman – President, ICEVI East Asia

Judit Gombas – ICEVI Europe

Gladys Viviana Correa – President, ICEVI Latin America

Michael Bina – President, ICEVI North America and the Caribbean

Martine Able-Williamson – President, ICEVI Pacific

Birendra Raj Pokharel – President, ICEVI West Asia

International Partner Members

Organización Nacional de Ciegos Españoles (ONCE, Spain) - www.once.es

Overbrook School for the Blind (USA) - www.obs.org

Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) - www.rnib.org.uk

Clovernook Centre for the Blind and Visually Impaired - https://clovernook.org/

Organisational Members

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

Trinidad and Tobago Blind Welfare Association - https://ttbwa.com/

Network Partners

World Blind Union - https://wbu.ngo/

The DAISY Consortium - https://daisy.org/

WIPO Accessible Books Consortium - https://www.accessiblebooksconsortium.org/en/

Update: Joint ICEVI–WBU Global Braille Literacy Campaign

Live Virtual Campaign Launch — World Braille Day, 4 January 2026

The ICEVI–WBU Global Braille Literacy Campaign, *More Braille: More Empowerment* was officially launched at a live online event hosted by the Braillists Foundation (UK). The launch attracted 210 registrants from 67 countries, and the officers of ICEVI and WBU thank the following braille leaders who served as panelists: Mr S.K. Rungta, President, WBU; Dr Praveena Sukhraj-Ely, Executive Board Member and Treasurer, ICEVI; Ms Judy Dixon, President, International Council on English Braille; Mr Reiner Delgado, Chair, European Blind Union Braille Working Group; and Mr Nicholas Hoekstra, researcher and consultant, WIPO Accessible Books Consortium.

We extend our sincere thanks to Dave Williams, Matthew Horspool, and Chantelle Griffiths of the Braillists Foundation, together with Stuart Lawler of ICEB, for their generosity in hosting and managing the event. The recordings of the live virtual launch are now available on the ICEVI YouTube channel:

- English: https://youtu.be/3bH7NkcI7IY
- French: https://youtu.be/t6ktaaqE07k
- Spanish: https://youtu.be/P7mIif64d6I

Additional Campaign Launch — New Delhi, India

In addition to the global live virtual launch, a hybrid launch of the global Braille Literacy Campaign took place in New Delhi as part of 2026 World Braille Day celebrations. The event was organised by the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) India, and approximately 500 blind participants attended in person. President of WBU, Mr S.K. Rungta, introduced the campaign, followed by a formal declaration of the launch by the Chief Guest, the Honourable Shri R. Venkataramani, Attorney General of India. A calendar, produced in both braille and print and featuring the campaign message, images of Louis Braille and the Braille Museum was officially released.

The recording of the NFB India launch is available at NFB India hosted launch event.

Campaign launch video montage

The campaign launch on World Braille Day included release of a video montage featuring the reflections of 23 members of the campaign Steering Committee and Working Groups. The 35-minute video offers a rich snapshot of global perspectives on braille literacy, advocacy, and access. It is available on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WW6u7tGr6gQ.

Updates: Three Focus Areas of the campaign and how you can assist

The ICEVI–WBU Global Braille Literacy Campaign, *More Braille: More Empowerment*, continues to make strong progress across its three strategic Focus Areas: Advocacy and Media (FA1), Information Resources (FA2), and Research (FA3). Together, these interconnected areas are designed to strengthen global awareness, build accessible knowledge systems, and generate evidence to support policy and practice in braille literacy worldwide.

In addition to progress within each Focus Area, the campaign is entering an important new phase focused on strengthening regional engagement and implementation. Recognising that meaningful and sustainable impact must be grounded in local contexts, the campaign is working closely with ICEVI and World Blind Union (WBU) regional leadership to translate global priorities into regionally relevant action.

This update provides an overview of recent developments across all three Focus Areas, together with information on upcoming opportunities for regional collaboration and implementation. It highlights key achievements, emerging priorities, and ways in which campaign supporters can contribute to the next phase of this global initiative.

Focus Area 1: Advocacy and Media

The Focus Area 1 (FA1) Working Group is focusing on strengthening public awareness, policy advocacy, and community engagement to promote braille as a fundamental literacy medium. FA1 is led by Gladys Correa, Mohammad Iqbal, and Frances Gentle, with contributions from a diverse international membership of educators, advocates, and braille users.

Over recent months, the FA1 Working Group has been actively refining its strategic approach and developing coordinated advocacy initiatives for 2026. Monthly meetings of the Working Group have resulted in a streamlined advocacy strategy centred around three core campaign messages, supported by targeted activities and smaller task groups.

Three key advocacy messages for 2026

1. Early literacy matters
2. Schools and teachers must be ready for braille learners and users
3. Braille enables independence, full participation, and empowerment

These messages reflect the campaign's commitment to promoting braille as an essential foundation for literacy, education, and full social participation. They will be promoted in phases across the year.

Three phases of advocacy activities

The FA1 advocacy work for 2026 will be organised across three phases:

Phase 1 (March – May 2026)
Key message: *Early literacy matters*

This phase emphasises the importance of introducing braille literacy at an early age so that children who are blind, deafblind or have low vision can develop strong reading and writing skills alongside their sighted peers.

Phase 2 (June – August 2026)
Key message: *Schools and teachers must be ready for braille learners and braille users*

This phase will focus on ensuring that education systems have the capacity to support braille learners and braille users, including the training of teachers in braille literacy, availability of braille materials, and inclusion of braille instruction within educational policies.

Phase 3 (September – November 2026)
Key message: *Braille enables independence, full participation, and empowerment*

This phase will highlight the lifelong value of braille literacy in enabling independence, employment opportunities, and full participation in society.

Establishing three targeted working groups

To implement these advocacy priorities effectively, FA1 has established three smaller Working Groups, each focusing on a specific target audience and communication strategy, commencing with Phase 1 (March – May 2026).

1. Public Messaging

This group is exploring ways to raise awareness about braille through media and communication platforms. Early discussions have included developing advocacy materials such as flyers, short social media messages, and content that can be shared through ICEVI and WBU networks.

The group is also considering opportunities to expand outreach through podcasts, interviews, and partnerships with existing media platforms that engage audiences interested in disability rights, literacy, and education.

2. Policy and Training

The second group is focusing on policy advocacy and professional training. Members are identifying strategies to reach universities, education ministries, curriculum authorities and disability agencies, encouraging stronger commitments to braille education.

One area of interest is identifying examples of countries where braille education is recognised or mandated within legal and policy frameworks, which could help inform advocacy with governments and education authorities. The group also agreed that braille producers and transcribers should be included as key stakeholders within this work.

3. Families and Young People

The third group is focusing on communication with families and young people, recognising that parents and caregivers play a critical role in promoting and supporting early braille literacy.

Ideas discussed so far include developing information sessions, radio or podcast discussions, and practical information resources that explain the benefits of braille literacy for children and young people.

How campaign supporters can assist Focus Area 1

The success of the advocacy and media work depends greatly on the engagement of campaign supporters across regions and networks. We invite our campaign supporters to assist FA1 in the following ways.

1. Share the campaign's key messages

Supporters are encouraged to share the three advocacy messages of the campaign throughout the year. The phased approach—focusing on early literacy, teacher readiness, and empowerment—provides a clear structure for communication activities.

2. Participate in dissemination of campaign materials

Organizations, educators, and advocates can help by sharing campaign materials through social media, newsletters, websites, and professional networks, helping the messages reach families, educators, policymakers, and braille users.

3. Connect the campaign with media and events

Supporters may be able to help identify podcasts, radio programs, conferences, or public events where campaign messages can be shared.

4. Engage with the FA1 working group

Each of the FA1 small groups meets regularly and welcomes contributions from individuals who have ideas, expertise, or networks that can support the advocacy effort.

Looking Ahead

The work of Focus Area 1 is helping to build a coordinated global advocacy voice for braille literacy. By aligning messaging, engaging diverse audiences, and leveraging

international networks, the campaign aims to strengthen awareness of braille as a critical literacy medium and a pathway to independence and empowerment.

Focus Area 2: Information Resources – Progress Update

The Focus Area 2 (FA2) Working Group is developing a comprehensive global repository of braille literacy resources. Led by Susan LaVenture, Samuel Foulkes, and Awais Alam, the Working Group continues to meet regularly and collaborates between meetings to gather and organise resources.

Building a Global Repository

Over the past several months, the FA2 team has established a strong organisational framework for collecting, categorising, and mapping braille-related information from across the world. A master resource framework has been established across 18 thematic categories, including education programs, technologies, services, standards, and training.

Two-Phase Development Approach

The work of FA2 is being implemented through a two-phase process.

Phase 1 – Resource Collection (current stage):

During this phase, working group members are collecting existing resources, web links, organisational contacts, and program descriptions from across the global braille community. The aim is to create a broad and inclusive base of information that reflects the diversity of braille initiatives worldwide.

Phase 2 – Organisation and Mapping

Once sufficient information has been collected; the group will move to the next phase of the project. This will include:

- Organising and curating the collected materials
- Identifying gaps in available information
- Reaching out to regions and organisations to fill those gaps
- Developing a geographic mapping system to identify where services and resources are available

This mapping will help users understand where braille services, training programs, equipment suppliers, and other braille-related information can be found around the world.

Key Features

The FA2 working group is also exploring ways to make the final resource repository as practical and useful as possible for educators, organisations, and braille users. Several important features are currently under consideration, including:

- Mapping of services and providers
- Cost and affordability information
- Technical support availability
- Low-cost device identification
- Repair service locations
- Integration with FA3 research

Language Accessibility

The FA2 Working Group recognises the importance of language accessibility in enabling broad participation. To support this, the contribution tool and related materials will be prepared in multiple languages, including English, French, and Spanish, to facilitate engagement from diverse regions.

Global Contribution Tool

A significant recent development is the drafting of a structured contribution tool that will enable individuals and organisations outside the working group to submit resources to the FA2 repository. This tool is designed to support ongoing contributions throughout the life of the campaign, while safeguarding the integrity and quality of the centralised resource collection.

The FA2 team anticipates finalising this tool in the coming month, followed by pilot testing with ICEVI regions. This phased approach will ensure that the tool is both accessible and effective across diverse regional contexts, and that contributions can be made without compromising the reliability of editable documents.

The contribution tool represents an important shift toward a more inclusive and scalable model of global knowledge sharing, allowing contributions from a wide range of stakeholders, including educators, organisations, braille users, and service providers.

How campaign supporters can assist Focus Area 2

As the FA2 working group continues building the global braille resource repository, campaign supporters can play an important role in strengthening this initiative.

There are several practical ways to contribute:

- **Contribute resources through the FA2 contribution tool**
  Once released, individuals and organisations will be invited to submit information about braille-related programs, services, technologies, and training opportunities.
- **Share local knowledge**
  Many valuable braille initiatives exist at local or national levels but may not be widely known internationally. Campaign supporters can help by identifying and sharing these resources.

- **Encourage networks to participate**
  Educators, libraries, organisations of persons with disabilities, braille transcribers, and technology providers may all have valuable information to contribute.
- **Support testing and refinement of the tool**
  ICEVI regions and campaign supporters will play an important role in piloting the contribution tool and providing feedback to strengthen its usability and effectiveness.
- **Identify gaps in existing resources**
  As the repository grows, feedback from campaign supporters will help the FA2 team identify areas where additional information is needed.

Looking Ahead

The work of Focus Area 2 represents an important step toward building a sustainable, collaborative, and globally representative knowledge base for braille literacy. By bringing together information about programs, technologies, services, and training opportunities, the campaign aims to support educators, organisations, policymakers, and braille users in strengthening braille literacy worldwide.

Focus Area 3: Research – Progress Update

The Focus Area 3 (FA3) Working Group is advancing a global research initiative to generate evidence on braille access, teaching, production, and use. The research is led by Dr Praveena Sukhraj-Ely, Dr Vimal Kumar Dengla, and Dr Birendra Raj Pokharel, supported by a dedicated working group of academics, researchers, and practitioners.

Research Framework and Ethics

A major milestone for FA3 has been the decision to obtain formal ethical clearance through a university Institutional Review Board (IRB). This process is essential for ensuring that the research meets international ethical standards, protects participants, and produces results that can be published in academic journals. Importantly, the ethical approval process will also enhance the credibility of the campaign's findings when advocating with governments, education ministries, and international agencies.

The ethics application is being coordinated by Nicholas (Nick) Hoekstra, Accessible Books Consortium (ABC) consultant, through the University of Kansas. Nick is also the team leader of the smaller academic task team within the Working Group that is focusing intensively on survey development and ethics documentation. This team, called the *Technical Working Group on Survey Development,* includes members from universities and organizations.

Global Survey

FA3 is developing a series of four surveys designed to gather information from different stakeholders involved in braille literacy from around the world. The surveys will be launched in a staggered sequence, approximately every three months, once ethical approval is obtained:

The four surveys will target:

- Individual Braille users
- Libraries for blind persons
- NGOs and organisations
- Braille transcribers

Ensuring Accessibility and Inclusive Participation

A key principle guiding the research is ensuring that participation is inclusive and globally representative. As Dr Praveena Sukhraj-Ely has emphasised, the surveys must reach individuals and organisations in countries where online access may be limited.

To support this goal, the FA3 team is developing multiple participation pathways, including:

- Online survey platforms
- Telephone-based survey administration through NGOs and organizations
- Possible toll-free phone participation in some countries (such as through talking libraries)
- Distribution through national member organizations of ICEVI and the World Blind Union (WBU)
- Regional coordination among member organisations

An example of this approach is the India model, proposed by WBU President, S.K. Rungta. In this model, several national organizations will divide the country geographically, each taking responsibility for collecting responses within specific regions. Coordination with government agencies, schools, and universities will help ensure that the research reaches a broad cross-section of braille users and professionals.

This strategy will help ensure that the research reflects diverse global experiences, rather than being limited to individuals with reliable internet access.

Ethical Safeguards

In addition to obtaining IRB approval, the research team is implementing strong safeguards to protect participants and maintain research integrity. These include:

- Ensuring anonymity and confidentiality of survey respondents
- Piloting survey questionnaires before full launch

- Translating questionnaires into accessible formats, including braille
- Developing confidentiality agreements for focus group and steering committee members handling sensitive data
- Clearly labelling confidential campaign documents to protect work-in-progress materials

The research instruments are currently undergoing refinement by the Technical Working Group on Survey Development, in preparation for Internal Review Board approval.

How campaign supporters can assist focus area 3

As the FA3 research moves toward its next phase, support from campaign partners and networks will be essential to ensure that the surveys reach as many participants as possible around the world.

Supporters of the campaign can assist the research in several practical ways:

1. **Pilot testing the surveys**
   Before the surveys are widely distributed, volunteers are needed to test the questionnaires and research instruments in visual and non-visual formats. Pilot testers can help identify unclear questions, accessibility issues, or translation problems.
2. **Sharing the surveys through networks**
   Once launched, campaign supporters can help by sharing information about the surveys through their professional and community networks, including schools, organizations of persons with disabilities, libraries for the blind, braille transcription services, and advocacy groups.
3. **Supporting translation and language review**
   To ensure global participation, the research instruments will need to be available in multiple languages. Volunteers with language expertise are needed to assist translating, and reviewing translations, to ensure that terminology—especially braille-related terms—is accurate and culturally appropriate.
4. **Contributing research expertise or university partnerships**
   The research team is also exploring partnerships with universities and research institutions that may be able to provide student researchers, data analysis support, or staff time as in-kind contributions.

Looking Ahead

The FA3 research initiative represents one of the most significant components of the *More Braille: More Empowerment* campaign. By gathering robust international data, the campaign aims to provide evidence that can strengthen advocacy for:

- improved braille teaching and learning

- increased production of braille materials
- better support for braille transcribers and libraries
- stronger national and international braille policies.

Once completed, the research findings will support evidence-based advocacy with governments, educational and curriculum authorities, and international organizations working to advance braille literacy worldwide.

With thanks to our campaign Sponsors

We extend our sincere thanks to the organisations that are generously supporting the Global Braille Literacy Campaign. Their commitment and partnership make it possible to advance access to braille literacy across regions and communities worldwide. All funds contributed are used directly to support the activities of the campaign at global and regional levels.

Diamond Sponsor – HumanWare

Platinum Sponsor - Dot Inc

Platinum Sponsor – CBM International

Gold Sponsor – South Pacific Educators in Vision Impairment (SPEVI Inc)

Silver Sponsor – Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB)

News from the ICEVI regions

Strengthening Regional Engagement: Meeting of ICEVI and WBU Regional Presidents

An important step in advancing the *More Braille: More Empowerment* campaign will take place in April 2026, when the Regional Presidents of ICEVI and the World Blind Union will meet with members of the Campaign Steering Committee to discuss how the campaign can be implemented across the world's regions.

While the campaign provides a shared global framework across Advocacy and Media, Information Resources, and Research, its success will depend on strong regional leadership and locally relevant implementation. The April meeting will provide an opportunity for regional leaders to explore how campaign objectives can be adapted to reflect cultural, linguistic, educational, and policy contexts within their regions.

Participants will explore ways to:

- Align regional and national initiatives with the three Focus Areas
- Identify regional and national priorities and opportunities
- Strengthen collaboration between ICEVI and WBU member organisations
- Share existing initiatives that contribute to campaign goals

The discussion will also consider how campaign activities can be integrated with regional events, training programs, and advocacy efforts, ensuring alignment with ongoing work.

A central principle of this effort is flexibility. The campaign will not adopt a single uniform global approach. Instead, regional leaders will be encouraged to shape activities that reflect local languages, systems, and community priorities. This approach will help ensure that the campaign remains relevant, inclusive, and effective in diverse contexts.

The Steering Committee looks forward to working closely with regional leaders to translate the campaign's global vision into meaningful action across all regions.

In closing

We warmly thank all members of the Steering Committee, Working Groups, and our many partners and supporters for their ongoing commitment to the *More Braille: More Empowerment* campaign. Your contributions are essential to advancing braille literacy as a foundation for education, inclusion, and empowerment worldwide.

To learn more about the Global Braille Literacy Campaign, please visit the ICEVI website, https://icevi.org/icevi-wbu-global-braille-literacy-campaign/, and the World Blind Union website, https://wbu.ngo/about/global-braille-literacy-campaign.

To join or support for work of the three Focus Areas, please contact us at braillecampaign@icevi.org.

Together, we can ensure that braille literacy remains at the heart of inclusive education and lifelong opportunity.

Africa Region

Mr Martin Kieti, Secretary-General, ICEVI Africa

Kenya set to transition to Unified English Braille starting 2026

Kenya has finally taken the bold move to transition to Unified English Braille (UEB) starting 2026! This move comes after years of advocacy led by ICEVI Africa leadership in Kenya, in collaboration with organizations serving people with visual impairment in the country.

In a letter dated 26th November 2025 and addressed to all government agencies that provide educational services to learners with visual impairment, the Principal Secretary for Basic Education noted that this decision had been taken considering "the well-established and documented advantages of UEB over the traditional Standard English Braille currently used in Kenya".

The Principal Secretary further appointed a high-level inter-agency Technical Committee to embark on the necessary preparations and procedures to ensure a seamless transition into UEB by January 2029. Over the next three years, the Committee will develop, implement and monitor the transition process, guide and

support individual government agencies in their individual roles in the transition and report to the Ministry of Education on progress.

In recognition of its role in pursuing the transition to UEB as well as its expertise and linkages with other countries that have adopted the use of UEB, ICEVI Africa was appointed to the Committee with the special role of providing technical guidance to the Committee and the process, and was honoured to host the 'Meet and Greet' meeting of the Committee held on 18th December 2025.

The adoption of UEB by Kenya is a timely milestone in celebrating the role of ICEVI in promoting Braille literacy and the use of quality Braille in learning. This transition will provide a single unified code for literary, mathematical, and technical materials; enhance the use of technology-based Braille; and, promote cross-border exchange of Braille materials, especially in electronic formats.

Caption: "Meet and Greet" meeting of the Technical Committee on Kenya's Transition to UEB.

Announcing the 2nd Africa Regional Conference, 2026

Palace Resort, Johannesburg, South Africa

28th September - 1st October 2026

Hosted in partnership with the Gauteng Department of Education and Prinshof School

About the Conference

ICEVI Africa is excited to announce the 2nd ICEVI Africa Conference to be held at the prestigious Emperors Palace Resort, Johannesburg, South Africa, from 28th September to 1st October 2026. The Conference builds on the successes of the 1st ICEVI Africa Conference held in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2023, with the attendance of 430

participants. The 2nd ICEVI Africa Conference is hosted by ICEVI Africa, ICEVI Global, the Gauteng Department of Education and Prinshof School.

The Conference is expected to bring together stakeholders in the education of people with visual impairment, including policymakers, government departments, bilateral and international agencies, service providers, educators, parents and people with visual impairment, to share, learn and define measures to enhance the quality of education for persons with visual impairment in Africa and around the world.

Conference Theme

With the theme: *"Towards 2030: Actualising Inclusion, Innovation and Impact in Education of Persons with Visual Impairment",* the Conference will assess progress and achievements made towards realisation of the promise of SDG 4 for people with visual impairment. The Conference will also explore measures necessary to accelerate the realisation of SDG 4 targets over the next four years, by promoting inclusion, innovation and impact.

Conference Program Outlay

An exciting Conference Program is under preparation, to give participants an optimal experience. Below is the Program outlay:

- Monday 28th September 2026: Arrival, Registration, Setup, Welcome Cocktail
- Tuesday 29th September 2026: Conference Program
- Wednesday 30th September 2026: Conference Program, Conference Gala
- Thursday 1st October 2026: Conference Program and Closure
- Friday 2nd October 2026: Excursions, Departure

The global ICEVI Executive Board will meet on 2nd and 3rd October.

Further Information

The Conference website www.conference2026.iceviafrica.org will be regularly updated and prospective participants are therefore encouraged to make frequent visits to the site. Participants can also write to conference@iceviafrica.org for additional information.

East Asia Region

Mr Silatul Rahim Dahman, President, ICEVI East Asia

Formation of the first Cambodian Braille Library (CBL)

Objective: Advancing equity and quality in special education and access to information for blind and visually impaired learners.

The Cambodia Braille Library Initiative commenced in 2025 with the aim of ensuring that blind and visually impaired students in Cambodia have access to higher education with equity, quality, dignity, and independence. Combining a physical resource centre, an accessible digital platform, and a production unit for Braille materials and assistive technologies, the initiative addresses the significant shortage of educational resources for blind learners.

Founded under the leadership of Mr. Sothey Mean, a visually impaired individual and former Krousar Thmey beneficiary, the project seeks to expand and diversify Braille production and technological support for university students and, more broadly, to enable people with visual impairments to access information more easily.

More than a resource hub, the Cambodia Braille Library promotes equity by helping reduce education dropout rates and improving academic outcomes through access to essential tools. With support from the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI), two libraries are being developed at the National University of Battambang (NUBB) and the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP).

Krousar Thmey actively champions this vision and is committed to mobilising resources to fully realise the initiative, inviting continuous support to build a future where no learner is left behind. For more than three decades, Krousar Thmey has been a national leader in disability inclusion, pioneering education programs for blind and visually impaired children in Cambodia. As one of the first organisations to introduce Braille, tactile learning, and inclusive pedagogical practices into Cambodian schools, Krousar Thmey has played a transformative role in shaping the country's inclusive educational landscape. However, as these students progressed to higher levels of education, new challenges emerged — challenges that ultimately inspired the creation of the Cambodia Braille Library. Blind and visually impaired students reaching university frequently found themselves without the accessible resources they relied upon during earlier schooling.

Despite progress in inclusive education, Cambodian universities still face significant barriers in supporting blind students. Updated textbooks, lecture notes, and reference documents are seldom available in Braille or accessible digital formats. Students must rely on outdated resources, peer assistance, or labour-intensive manual transcription processes that delay learning and limit autonomy.

Braille production in Cambodia remains limited in both scale and diversity. Existing production units cannot meet the growing demand for specialised, university-level materials. The only operational Braille production currently exists within the National Institute for Special Education, following the transfer of Krousar Thmey special schools to the Ministry of Education.

Compounding these issues is the scarcity of specialised equipment within universities. Institutions lack Braille embossers, digital Braille displays, accessible

software, and scanning devices capable of converting printed text into readable formats. Staff capacity is also limited, as university personnel have not received training in Braille production, accessible technology management, or the creation of digital accessible documents.

These systemic gaps result in unequal access to higher education for blind students. The consequences include increased academic pressure, slower learning processes, reduced independence, higher risk of dropout, lower academic performance, and diminished confidence. Ultimately, without adequate accessibility infrastructure, blind learners cannot fully exercise their rights as enacted in the UNCRPD.

The Cambodia Braille Library Initiative responds directly to the challenges outlined above. By establishing well-equipped resource centres within two local universities, strengthening staff capacity, and expanding production of accessible materials, the initiative seeks to create a sustainable learning environment where blind students can thrive autonomously.

ICEVI East Asia is committed to partnering with CBL, and an MoU between ICEVI East Asia and CBL was signed in December 2025. ICEVI Global was represented by Frances Gentle, Past President; ICEVI East Asia by the Regional President, Silatul Rahim Dahman; and CBL by its Chairman, Mr. Sothey Minh. ICEVI East Asia will continue to monitor the progress of CBL at least until 2028.

West Asia Region

Dr Birendra Raj Pokharel, President ICEVI West Asia

I am pleased to share that Action on Disability Rights and Development (ADRAD), Nepal has recently launched a documentary focused on the promotion of accessible ICT and Braille literacy, particularly from the perspective of persons with visual disabilities in low-resource contexts. The documentary highlights the practical role of Braille alongside screen readers, accessible digital content, and inclusive technology in education, and Marrakesh Treaty ratification, it is in Nepali language though

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kETB5CmupDI

This initiative aligns closely with the campaign's core message of *"More Braille: More Empowerment"* and contributes to the Advocacy and Media focus area by amplifying lived experiences, local innovations, and policy-relevant narratives around Braille and accessible information. We hope this documentary can add value to the broader global dialogue and serve as a useful resource for awareness-raising and advocacy efforts.

North America and Caribbean Region

Dr Mike Bina, President, ICEVI North America/Caribbean Region

In August-September 2025, the ICEVI NA/C region team, in partnership with the Trinidad and Tobago Blind Welfare Association (TTBWA), delivered a series of virtual literacy-focused sessions to educators in Trinidad and Tobago. This summer literacy series focused on techniques and strategies for early braille instruction. Topics included:

- Tactile Exploration Strategies
- Conventional Braille Literacy Programs
- Individualized Braille Literacy Programs (I-M-ABLE)
- Getting Started with Access Technology

Planning and organization for the Seeing Beyond the Horizon Conference (also known as the Canadian Vision Teachers' Conference) is returning after several years on hiatus. This virtual conference will be held on May 1, 2026, and feature keynote speakers and professional roundtables on a range of topics related to equitable access to learning for blind and low vision students.

Dr. Belinda Rudinger, ICEVI NA/C Region Vice President for the United States, reported that Braille advocacy was evident in the observance of community events such as Family Days hosted by the Library of Congress, where families, educators, and patrons explored tactile literacy, technology, and the range of free services available. World Braille Day was observed throughout the country to raise awareness about the importance of braille as literacy. Further, improvements were made in awareness at different organizations, such as the adapted tours created at the National Museum of the US Air Force.

The Monarch braille device, developed through a collaboration from the American Printing House for the Blind, National Federation of the Blind, and Humanware, was named one of Time Magazine's Best Inventions of 2025. This groundbreaking multiline braille display with tactile graphics was shared with more new users than ever in 2025.

Latin America Region

Ms Gladys Correa, President, ICEVI Latin America Region

ICEVI Latin America, in its capacity as a regional body of ICEVI, is joining the Global Braille Literacy Campaign "More Braille – More Empowerment" through a range of actions carried out across the 17 countries in the region where National Delegations have been established.

1. Dissemination

Since January 4, videos featuring key representatives from Latin America have been shared every Sunday on our social media platforms. These videos convey messages highlighting the importance of literacy for children who are blind or have severe low vision through the Braille System.

To date, 11 videos have been published, and additional contributors continue to be invited in order to expand the initiative's reach, in alignment with the campaign's international strategy.

2. Teacher Training

A) Diploma Program in Braille Didactics

Considering that, in our region, the teaching of the Braille System is often carried out by professionals without specific training in its pedagogy, a 120-hour diploma program will soon be launched in collaboration with Mondragón University in Mexico.

This initiative aims to strengthen the pedagogical competencies of those who teach Braille, as the lack of specialized training negatively impacts both the learning process and the subsequent use of the system in daily life. This, in turn, limits access to a key tool for the empowerment of persons with visual disabilities.

B) Publication of Technical Documents

A team of specialized professionals is in the final stage of developing a document on teaching a second language to persons with visual disabilities, in which the use of the Braille System plays a fundamental role.

C) Webinars

Throughout the year, a series of webinars will be conducted in collaboration with partner organizations, focusing on Braille literacy. These will include specific topics such as its teaching to children who are deafblind, among others.

3. Youth Engagement

Work with the youth group continues to be strengthened, promoting the inclusion of new participants and consolidating spaces for exchange, particularly through WhatsApp groups.

In addition to these specific actions, the region is also promoting other initiatives aimed at the comprehensive training of professionals and fostering coordinated efforts with stakeholders in the health sector.

Other Braille Related News

More Than Just a Reading System

Nicholas Hoekstra

Program Management Consultant, WIPO Accessible Books Consortium, writes of the importance of braille to his life on the occasion of World Braille Day and the launch of the ICEVI – WBU Global Braille Literacy Campaign.

Braille, for me, is more than just a reading system. It is a symbol of a life of independence. It is the labels on the spice jars that make the difference between food my family wants to eat… and food my family may not want to eat. It allows me to read books to my three year old daughter.

Caption: Nick, with his daughter, reading a book in braille. (Image: Marcela Paiva Veliz)

I lost my sight in 1992, at the age of eight-years-old. Unfortunately, the school near my home in Comstock Park, Michigan, did not have any instructors who could teach me braille. So I began the third grade that fall at Ken-o-Sha Park elementary school, an inclusive school about thirty minutes from my home.

At eight-years-old, I had literally just spent my entire life learning to painstakingly write. Now, I was going to have to begin that process all over again, this time using the raised system of dots known as braille. I will never forget my teacher, Mrs. Claysmith, reminding me again and again to capitalize my name in braille. She taught me much more than braille. She instilled in me the importance of education.

We capitalize important words, and you are important too. As a person with a disability, the world will underestimate you. Your biggest tool to overcome that is education.

Mrs. Claysmith, braille teacher.

I was placed in what was called the “VIP room,” along with three other blind or visually impaired students. The idea was that I could intensively learn braille during that first year, while doing lessons orally with the teachers so as not to fall behind in other subjects. In the second year, I would remain at Ken-o-Sha, but move to a regular classroom where I would learn alongside sighted students while still receiving braille support for math when needed. After three years, I would return home to Comstock Park to attend my local middle school, integrated and on track for academic success.

Mrs. Claysmith’s words stayed with me for decades. I remembered her voice when I walked into the Harvard Graduate School of Education to begin my master’s degree in international education policy. I still hear it now as I complete my doctoral degree in special education at the University of Kansas.

For years, I thought the “VIP” room at Ken-o-Sha Park elementary stood for the “very important persons” room. In fact, I still believe it. The teachers who taught me braille were very important, and they felt the same of each and every one of their students.

Caption: A number of spice jars with braille labels. (Image: Marcela Paiva Veliz)

Whereas braille was once about my own education, now it also plays a role in how I educate my family. Braille allows me to share stories, laughter, and memories. Nothing could ever replace the personal impact of reading a book to my daughter: making up silly voices or changing the names to match hers.

As we mark the anniversary of Louis Braille’s birth on World Braille Day, I am grateful to have been encouraged to learn braille as a child. I am equally grateful to now contribute to the work of the Accessible Books Consortium. Through ABC’s Training

and Technical Assistance (TTA) projects, I have the privilege of helping organizations around the world produce accessible books and strengthen their capacity to serve blind and visually impaired learners. In many ways, it is a continuation of what my teachers gave me: the belief that with the right tools, every child can learn, participate, and imagine a future filled with possibility.

ICEVI – WBU Global Braille Literacy Campaign

On World Braille Day, the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI) and the World Blind Union (WBU) launched the Global Braille Literacy Campaign, highlighting braille as the foundation of literacy, independence, and full participation in society. The campaign seeks to strengthen global commitment to braille by:

- Highlighting its continuing relevance in the digital era;
- Encouraging collaboration across countries and regions;
- Amplifying the voices of braille users worldwide, encouraging educators to learn and teach braille.

How ABC supports Braille Literacy

ABC promotes braille in all three of its primary activities:

- Capacity Building – ABC provides training and funding to organizations in low income countries for the publication of books in embossed braille or in digitally accessible formats that can be read with the use of refreshable braille displays.
- ABC Global Book Service – this global library catalogue of over one million accessible format titles is available for cross-border exchange under the framework of the Marrakesh Treaty. The Service contains over 118,000 braille titles, including 17,000 braille music scores.
- Accessible Publishing – ABC encourages publishers to adopt “born accessible” practices, including the production of books in the accessible Epub3 format, so that their publications can be read by persons who are blind or visually impaired using assistive technology, including refreshable braille displays.

Source: https://www.accessiblebooksconsortium.org/en/w/news/2026/more-than-just-a-reading-system?utm_source=WIPO+Newsletters&utm_campaign=8c7517c6e7-ABC_NEWSLETTER_WORLDBRAILLEDAY_EN_050126&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-d7d049d5b3-564214319

Statement of the World Intellectual Property Organization

34th Session of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Geneva, March 9, 2026

Marrakesh Treaty

The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) is the United Nations specialized agency that administers the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled. This humanitarian treaty makes reference in its preamble to the CRPD principles of non-discrimination, equal opportunity, accessibility and full and effective participation and inclusion in society. The Marrakesh Treaty complements the CRPD's principles by allowing for two key provisions:

> firstly, it requires Contracting Parties to implement provisions allowing for Authorized Entities to produce accessible format copies of literary works; and
>
> secondly, it allows Authorized Entities to exchange such accessible format copies across borders.

Such accessible format copies are produced and exchanged by Authorized Entities without the need to request permission from the copyright owner, for the purpose of benefitting people who are blind, visually impaired or otherwise print disabled.

The Marrakesh Treaty was adopted in Morocco in 2013 and as of today, there are 102 contracting parties covering 128 countries since the European Union joined as one bloc.

The first country to ratify the Marrakesh Treaty was India, and the Treaty came into force on September 30, 2016, upon the accession of Canada, the 20th Member State.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the coming into force of the Marrakesh Treaty and we believe it is fitting that we are also celebrating the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). As we commemorate the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the CRPD, we are

reminded of the fundamental importance of equal access to information, culture, and education for all persons with disabilities.

We wish to highlight that joining the Marrakesh Treaty is the first step; what is critical is that the provisions of the Treaty need to be transposed into national law, so that people who are print disabled can fully benefit from the Treaty.

WIPO is ready to work with Member States to have them join the Treaty or to provide them with legislative advice for implementation of the provisions into national law.

Accessible Books Consortium

The Accessible Books Consortium (ABC) is a public-private partnership that was established in 2014. It is managed and funded by WIPO and seeks to increase the number of accessible format copies of works around the globe by implementing the objectives of the Marrakesh Treaty at an operational level.

More Braille, More Empowerment

We note that last year ABC joined many organizations in celebrating the 200th anniversary of the invention of braille. This year, ABC has joined the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment and the World Blind Union in a global braille literacy campaign entitled "More Braille, More Empowerment", which highlights braille as the foundation of literacy, independence, and full participation in society for people who are visually impaired. The campaign seeks to strengthen global commitment to braille by:

- Highlighting its continuing relevance in the digital era;
- Encouraging collaboration across countries and regions;
- Amplifying the voices of braille users worldwide, encouraging educators to learn and teach braille.

Braille is integrated throughout ABC's core activities – the ABC Global Book Service includes over 120,000 braille titles, our training programs fund digital and embossed braille production in developing and least developed countries, and our accessible publishing initiatives promote the use of technologies such as refreshable digital braille displays.

ABC has three main activities:

Training and Technical Assistance

ABC provides training in the latest accessible book production techniques. Once participants complete the ABC Online Course in Accessible Book Production, ABC provides funding to its partner organization so that its personnel can utilize their recently acquired skills to produce educational titles in accessible formats for students who are print disabled. The ABC model for training and technical assistance

aims to equip organizations in developing and least developed countries with the ability to produce educational materials to be used by primary, secondary and university students who are print disabled.

From 2015 to 2025, ABC implemented TTA projects in 41 countries, collectively producing over 24,000 educational books in accessible formats.

ABC is currently collaborating with UNICEF and the DAISY Consortium on developing an AI Tool for speeding up the labour-intensive process of converting print publications into accessible format copies. Preliminary tests show that this AI Tool will significantly reduce production time enabling Authorized Entities to produce more accessible format copies of works while respecting Marrakesh Treaty due-care obligations.

ABC Global Book Service

The ABC Global Book Service provides Authorized Entities, with the ability to search, order and exchange accessible format copies of works across borders at no cost. The Service now includes 150 participating Authorized Entities, with more than 50 percent of all Entities located in developing or least developed countries. See our website for the list of Authorized Entities that signed an agreement to join the Service. The ABC catalogue has 1.2 million titles in 80 languages available for cross-border exchange for those Authorized Entities located in countries that have both joined and transposed the provisions of the Marrakesh Treaty into national law.

ABC also offers a Beneficiary Application at no cost to participating Authorized Entities. The Beneficiary Application gives patrons of participating Authorized Entities located in countries that have both joined and transposed the provisions of the Marrakesh VIP Treaty the ability to search for, and immediately download, accessible format copies of works contained in its catalogue. There are over 540,000 accessible format copies available for immediate download in the Beneficiary Application.

Through a collaboration with Dolphin Computer Access, a developer in the United Kingdom of accessibility software, the ABC Beneficiary Application catalogue is now available in Dolphin EasyReader. EasyReader is a user-friendly app available for free on most reading devices.

For those Authorized Entities located in countries that have not yet joined the Marrakesh Treaty, or that have not yet transposed the provisions into national law, the ABC Global Book Service has about 25,000 titles (primarily in English and French) available for cross border exchange further to permissions granted by publishers.

Accessible Publishing

ABC promotes the production of “born accessible” works by publishers, i.e., books that are usable from the start by persons who are print disabled. Every year, ABC organizes the ABC International Excellence Award for Accessible Publishing to recognize organizations that provide outstanding leadership and achievements in the advancement of the accessibility of digital publications to persons with print disabilities. The winners of the 2025 ABC International Excellence Award for Accessible Publishing were announced during the World Blindness Summit held in September 2025 in São Paulo, Brazil.

The 2026 Award will be presented on April 13, 2026, at the Bologna Children's Book Fair, focusing on inspiring children's book publishers to make titles accessible to all young readers.

For further information about the Marrakesh Treaty or the Accessible Books Consortium, please contact Accessible.Books@wipo.int

Call for Submissions: *The Educator* – July 2026 Issue

The ICEVI Publications Committee invites submissions for the July 2026 issue of *The Educator*.

Theme: Technology and Artificial Intelligence in the Education and Daily Life of Persons with Visual Impairment

As digital innovation accelerates globally, this issue will explore how technology and artificial intelligence are shaping inclusive education, accessibility, literacy, independence, and participation for learners who are blind, deafblind, or have low vision.

We welcome contributions from across regions, sectors, and disciplines, including the following:

- Articles, reports, and reviews
- Disability-inclusive education programs and models
- Position papers of interest to:
    - ICEVI members and partners
    - Parents and caregivers
    - Educators, administrators, and health professionals
    - Researchers and university students
    - Vision impairment (VI) technology manufacturers

Why contribute?

By contributing to *The Educator*, your work reaches a global audience of professionals, organisations, and advocates working in the blindness and low vision field. Your contribution helps to amplify solutions, innovations, research, and lived experiences across borders. All submissions are fully attributed, providing visibility and connection opportunities for authors and organisations.

Recent publications are available in English, Spanish and French (Word and PDF), and Braille (BRF) – go to https://icevi.org/resource-library/the-educator/

Submission Deadline: 31 May 2026

Submission Guidelines:

Language: English
Author information: Include your name, title, country location, and contact details
Format:

- MS Word
- Arial 12-point font
- Double line spacing
- Left-aligned paragraphs

Style:

- Avoid complex jargon
- Define acronyms, abbreviations, and technical terms

Length:

- Scholarly manuscripts:
  - Up to 5,000 words
  - Must comply with ethics requirements for original research
  - Include confirmation of permission to use the material
- Reports, reviews, program descriptions, position papers, etc.: approximately 1,500 words

Figures and tables: Must be numbered and clearly labelled
Media:

- Photos and videos are welcome
- Please obtain written permission from parents/caregivers for photos of children under 18 years
- Obtain verbal permission for photos of adults
- The ICEVI Consent Form may be downloaded from the Publications section of the ICEVI website, https://icevi.org/icevi-consent-form/
- Include a brief description or caption with each photo (or Alt Text description)

How to Submit

Email submissions to: publications@icevi.org. We warmly encourage organisations and individuals to share research, innovation, practice, and lived experience. Together, we can strengthen global dialogue on technology and AI in education and the daily lives of persons with visual impairment.

We look forward to your contributions.

ICEVI Publications Committee
International Council for Education of Persons with Visual Impairment

Contact Us

To learn more about ICEVI and what we do, please visit our website, https://icevi.org, or contact the ICEVI Secretariat, email info@icevi.org.

To learn more about the joint ICEVI-WBU global braille literacy campaign, or to subscribe to the E-News or braille campaign email lists, please visit our dedicated webpage, https://icevi.org/icevi-wbu-global-braille-literacy-campaign/.

To submit an article for publication in the ICEVI E-News or The Educator, please contact The Editor, ICEVI Publications Committee, email publications@icevi.org.