

Tailor-made accessible rehabilitation in a global context

Chair: Petra Wijen

Co-chairs: Annelies Buurmeijer and Iris Schreurs



CV of (co)Chairs:

The (co)chairs are international programme managers at the Knowledge Expertise and Innovation (KEI) Department of Royal Dutch Visio. Main aim of Visio's international programmes is development and reinforcement of Visually Impaired Persons (VIPs) support system which enables VIPs to participate and live their life to their full potential in their society. The international programmes are always developed and implemented in close cooperation with relevant stakeholders. Focus areas are Africa, the Middle-East and Southeast Europe.

Petra Wijen, MSc in international communication works as an international project- and programme manager at Visio since 2008. She has vast working experience in Latin America, Africa and Europe. Actually responsible for programmes in Uganda, the Westbank and the Balkan region.

Annelies Buurmeijer, Master degree in Special Educational Needs, works at Visio since 1995. She started working at a special school for visually impaired as special teacher and coordinator, since 2012 she works as international project and programme manager. Currently responsible for projects and programmes in Kenya, Zambia, Botswana and Ghana.

Iris Schreurs, Management Degree for Health Care, works at Visio since 2006. She started as a Manager for the living and day care facilities for visually impaired children. Since 2013 she works as an international project and programme manager. At the moment responsible for projects and programmes in Egypt, Jordan and Europe.

Symposium Abstract:

All international programmes of Visio are intrinsically linked to the development or reinforcement of services for people with low vision in different countries with different challenges. To maximize impact for the beneficiaries, different relevant aspects within the VIP system are linked: identification and screening – assessment – early intervention – education – rehabilitation - work – lobby and advocacy. The programme interventions are at strategic, management and operational level. Starting point of each programme is a shared ambition. From the very beginning stakeholders are actively involved and encouraged to work together in reaching the overall purpose in a sustainable and tailor-made way. We are proud to present three best practices in which the presenters share their experiences in setting up low vision services in challenging settings within different contexts. There also will be two rapid fire poster presentations from Uganda and Botswana. In both countries programmes on the enhancement of quality of low vision services recently have started in cooperation with Visio.

Presentations:

1. A comprehensive support system for persons with vision impairment in the Palestinian Territories: A good practice model (Jihan Zeidan and Abeer Salhi)
2. New Model for Early Intervention and Inclusion with Parents Participation in Egypt (Doaa Mabrouk)
3. Challenges and successes of inclusive education of children with albinism and assessment of all low vision persons (Mary Kiptoo and Mohamed Almasi from Kenya)
4. Improvement of low vision services in Botswana and Uganda: Rapid fire poster presentations (Kebabonye Kuswani, Alice Lehasa and Esther Grace Candiru)

1. A Comprehensive Support System for Persons with Vision Impairment in Palestinian Territories: A Good Practice Model

By Jihan Zeidan and Abeer Ayesh; Jihan Zeidan is, coordinator of the Vision Rehabilitation Department at Bethlehem Arab Society for Rehabilitation (BASR) and Abeer Ayesh is coordinator of the school health programme of the Ministry of Education of the Palestinian Territories

Persons with impaired vision in Palestine still live in the margins of society and lack equal access to better opportunities in life. In order to promote their full inclusion and effective participation, there is an urgent need to develop a comprehensive support system to

empower them and offer them quality rehabilitation and education services that would enable them to be fully included as productive members of society.

Bethlehem Arab Society for Rehabilitation (BASR) took the initiative to develop pioneer Vision Rehabilitation (VR) Services in Palestine by creating the sole Vision Rehabilitation unit of its kind, adopting a multifaceted rehabilitation model that involves functional vision assessment within the context of lifestyle, attitudes and psychological well-being. It also involves optimal training in the effective use of assistive devices as well as follow up services, all provided by a qualified team. This is in addition to early intervention, O&M and family support services, raising public awareness, capacity building of professionals working with persons with VI as well as empowerment of persons with VI as self-advocates.

In line with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOEHE) national inclusive education plan for persons with VI as well as BASR's ambition to become a good practice model for Palestine and the Middle East in offering healthcare, rehabilitation and education services for persons with impaired vision, BASR and Royal Dutch Visio in the Netherlands are working together with MOEHE and other relevant stakeholders to achieve the full inclusion of persons with VI in society.

2. New Model for Early Intervention and Inclusion with Parents Participation in Egypt

By Doaa Mabrouk, co-founder and director of Baseera, foundation for people with visual impairment

Inclusion is key to successful education of students with visual impairment. Inclusive education means disabled and non-disabled young people learning together in ordinary school provision, with appropriate networks of support. At Baseera we have adopted a comprehensive approach in ensuring the inclusion of children with visual impairment in mainstream education. We start with an individualized assessment of each student's learning abilities and difficulties. Then we create an individualized program for each student to support their learning. Most visually impaired require one-on-one support but we also encourage, when possible, small groups working together for character building. Beside the education support program we provide social skills, self-help, and orientation and mobility support for students with visual impairment. We also provide special training for the students' surrounding communities, mainly: the parents, the school teachers, and health professionals. We provide specific know-how and skills for each target group in dealing with VIPs. This training program is specifically important because of the lack of general knowledge about the special needs of people with a visual impairment and how it differs from other disabilities.

In promoting the full independence of VIPs, we succeeded in getting the Ministry of Education's approval on allowing the VIPs to take their exams on the computer rather than the traditional method which requires a delegated person to write on their behalf. Moreover, the special need students were not admitted in Technical Education by Law, after lobbying by BASEERA low vision students are now accepted. Baseera, also cooperated with the National Authority for quality Assurance and Accreditation of Education to have criteria for VIPs inclusion in all Higher education disciplines.

3. Challenges and successes of inclusive education of children with albinism and assessment of all low vision persons

Mary Kiptoo, director of Kenya Albino Child Support programme (KACSU) and Mohamed Almasi, low vision therapist at the Kwale Eye Centre, at the south coast of Kenya

Albinism refers to a group of inherited genetic mutations that cause little or no pigment in the skin, eye and hair. Without melanin, the eye is unable to function properly hence the impaired vision.

There are several myths and facts associated with albinism that has given rise to stigmatization and discrimination of persons with albinism especially in Africa and they face different problems.

Most of the children in Africa cannot go to school because of the discrimination meted out to them.. They are subjected to the same learning conditions as their pigmented counterparts.

The main aim of KACSU is to provide access to education to all children with albinism, provide basic necessities like sun-lotions and good clothing and create awareness/advocacy so that we can reduce discrimination and social stigma. In 2015, we started working with Royal Dutch Visio and our joint aims are:

1. To assist the albino children access proper eye care by getting professional assessment and thereafter getting devices according to the individual sight problem'
2. Train teachers in inclusive schools on how to handle low vision children (including those with albinism)
3. Provide master classes to low vision assessment experts
4. Vocational training for youth with albinism in the farm and other local institutions that offer artisan courses.

Above all KACSU is very active in lobbying the government to adopt legislations that are suitable for persons with albinism. Fund awareness creation and health care for persons with albinism. Exempt persons with albinism from paying taxes and recognise Albinism international day.

4. Improvement of low vision services in Botswana and Uganda: Rapid fire poster presentations

Botswana: Kebabonye Kuswani, coordinator Central Resource Centre (CRC), Ministry of Basic Education and Alice Lehasa, national eye coordinator, Ministry of Health and Wellbeing,

Uganda Esther Grace Candiru (head VI unit, Special Needs and Rehabilitation department of Kyambogo University,

Brief introduction of two poster presentations about aspired improvement of low vision services in Botswana and Uganda. Recently Visio started two programmes in Botswana and Uganda aiming at full participation of partially sighted students in preschool, primary and secondary schools. Various strategies and interventions are used: Empowerment of visually impaired children and youngsters, sensitization of parents, capacity building of low vision specialists, rehabilitation workers and educational professionals, improvement of resource rooms and low vision centres, curriculum development , lobbying at governmental level and promotion and facilitation of cooperation of stakeholders. In the poster presentations more information about both programmes is provided.