

# BLIND SA ANNUAL REPORT 2015/2016

## ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE



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**NPO 000-606** (not-for-profit organisation  
registration number)

**PBO 930003512** (public benefit  
organisation registration number)

### STATUTORY MANDATE

Blind SA is a national organisation of the blind and for the blind. Established in 1946 as the South African Blind Workers Organisation, we soon realised that our aim should not only be to place blind persons in the open labour market, but to

provide a full spectrum of services to all visually impaired persons in South Africa.

### VISION STATEMENT

The vision of Blind SA is to do whatever is necessary or conducive to empower visually impaired people to become economically self supporting and to live a full and meaningful life as citizens of South Africa.

### MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Blind SA is to promote the interests of all visually impaired people through the provision of appropriate services -

To create an informed blind society,

To enable them to gain meaningful employment,

To enhance their quality of life, and

To incorporate them into everyday life.

### PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

Independence – while Blind SA is an independent organisation of the blind and for the blind, we understand the importance to partner with others that share our vision and mission: government, our member organisations, other organisations in our field (SA National Council for the Blind (SANCb), SA Library for the Blind, SA Disability Alliance (SADA) and other national and international service providers.

Human Dignity & Equality – we respect the dignity of all people with whom we interact and treat them with understanding and respect, taking into account human diversity, their disability and related needs.

Accountability – to provide the people that we serve with appropriate services of the highest standards; to take responsibility for all expenditure of monies and time, ensuring that it is done in a productive and effective manner.

Responsible Employer - Blind SA supports its staff through effective administration and HR functions, encourages own-initiative and career-path development and provide a safe and productive work environment. In our working relationship we expect mutual respect, honesty and integrity.

## SERVICES

Advocacy on issues affecting the visually impaired

Employment placement

Study Bursaries to visually impaired students

Loan facilities for the purchase of work and study related assistive devices

Distribution of appropriate, reliable information through various publications:

Blind SA News, Braillorama, Braillorette, Braille Trumpet, Youth Magazine and Parents Network newsletter.

Braille instruction by an accredited braille trainer

Orientation and Mobility training through accredited O & M practitioners

Education through our Education and Braille Committees, with assistance to learners in special and mainstream schools and students registered with tertiary institutions

Awareness programmes on blindness at schools, service organisations, churches and old age homes

Provision of assistive devices: white canes, talking and braille watches, liquid level indicators, braille paper, etc.

Braille production of literature in UBC (unified braille code) in 11 official languages.



*Tracy Smith (seated right), Blind SA's Braille Trainer, with one of her students*

## PRESIDENTIAL ANNUAL REPORT

***"Blessed is the person who sees the need, recognizes the responsibility and actively becomes the answer" – William Arthur Ward (1921-1994)***



***Miss Cathy Donaldson***

These wise words by famous American writer and poet, WA Ward, aptly describe Blind SA – we are an organisation *of* the blind and *for* the blind, working tirelessly to make a difference in the lives of countless visually impaired individuals.

In this Annual Report, chairpersons of various committees and key operational staff will report on all the activities focusing on the excellent work done by their respective committees and departments during the year, keeping in mind that all this work is done by volunteers who selflessly donate time and money to get the job done.

Blind SA is playing a leading role on the national front:

We renewed our affiliation to South African National Council for the Blind (SANCB) with myself elected as the Vice Chairperson,

SA Braille Authority - we are a Founding Member, where Ntshavheni Netshituni,

our Vice President serves as its President and

Blind SA is now a member of SA Disability Alliance (SADA).

On an international front, we are a member of:

The African Union of the Blind (AFUB), where myself is the Vice President and the Chairperson of the Women's Committee,

World Blind Union (WBU),

International Council on English Braille (ICEB) where Christo de Klerk is the elected President, and

International Council on the Education of the Visually Impaired (ICEVI) with Dr Praveena Sukhraj-Ely serving as the Principal Officer.

In addition, our organisation joined the Publisher's Association of South Africa (PASA) and is represented in several national and provincial government and non-governmental structures, specifically advancing the rights of persons with visual impairments.

Blind SA is a national organisation that operates in terms of the Non-Profit Organisations Act and as a Public Benefit Organisation in terms of the Income Tax Act. This legislation calls for different types of reporting to government and, while this report meets many of the requirements of the legislation, it is also a reflection of the past year's activities for the benefit of Blind SA's members.

Over the past sixty nine years, Blind SA has grown from a small organisation of the blind and for the blind (a consumer group)

functioning in a tough, at times even hostile environment into a large, well-respected partner in the blindness sector. As some service providers have fallen away or where services were inadequate, Blind SA has become a service provider itself. It is however essential that it should also maintain its consumer-oriented character. In some ways, what Blind SA *does*, is almost of less significance than what Blind SA *is*: a body to be consulted as a voice of visually impaired people and a body that can advocate effectively on behalf of this group as and when necessary.

Blind SA has 25 member organisations and acts as the voice of its members and to a large extent as the voice of other visually impaired South Africans as well. The fact that its member organisations are autonomous and separately registered in terms of the NPO Act, makes it essential that member organisations' leadership should also be fully informed of the needs, aspirations and abilities of their members. Member organisations should be strengthened, as this is the only growth point for the organisation as a whole.

In the early days, a new member organisation was formed by a group of members seceding from an existing member organisation and then the existing member organisation mentored and monitored the new member organisation for a year or two.

In the past year the General Assembly (formerly known as the Head Committee) arranged leadership training and capacity building workshops for newly-formed member organisations. This will be an ongoing process as new member organisations join Blind SA.

The following delegates from member organisations successfully attended our

Head Committee meeting in September last year:

**Blind SA Breedevallei**

Mr C. Vorster

**Blind SA Peninsula**

Mr A. Vosloo

**BWO Orion**

Miss S. Webber

**Egoli Blind**

Mr H. Kruger

**House of Hope**

Ms M. Letlhage

**Fetakgomo Association for the Blind**

Ms E. Maako

**Inkwekwezi Blind Society**

Ms K. Malilindane

**Itereleng Association for People with Disabilities**

Mr T. Mangalenyana

**Itsoseng Support Group for the Visually Impaired**

Mr I. Mphuthi

**Ke Ya Rona Association for the Blind**

Ms L. Makhetha

**Khutala Association for the Blind**

Mr B. Mthimunya

**Mbombela Blind Association**

Mr D. Nkosi

**Monsterlous Blind Association**

Mr S. Mabasa

**Now is the Time Blind SA**

Mr S. Mabusela

**Reikamohetse QwaQwa**

Mr S. Nkosi

**Siyazingca Social Group**

Mr J.B. Jakavula

Your contributions were invaluable at this important gathering and we are indeed looking forward to your active participation in future.

As I conclude this Annual Report as president of Blind SA, I wish to pay tribute to every person who has assisted me in carrying forward the ideals and tasks of Blind SA. The leaders and volunteers at



national and member organisation level, the staff and our numerous members throughout the country have worked as a collective to promote the interests of visually impaired South Africans in one of the most momentous and exciting decades of South African history. Let us not squander the fruits and opportunities of democracy by concentrating on the challenges only.

None of this, however, would have been possible without the support from the Department of Arts and Culture and its committed officials. I must acknowledge the leadership role played by Blind SA's Executive Committee, chairpersons of committees, staff and Blind SA's affiliate organisations.

To every donor and member of staff – it was your selfless contributions of time, money and effort that made a telling difference to blind people all over South Africa.

Who knows what the future holds? Like most other NGOs and NPOs, Blind SA is also experiencing some financial challenges and we are pro-active in dealing with these to ensure the long-term sustainability of our organisations and the services we currently render. Furthermore, with ever-changing technology, we will be embarking on expanding the services we currently offer by venturing into technical braille production (Mathematics) and DAISY (digital access information system), i.e. produce literature in alternative formats (DAISY, MP3, large print and soft copy braille) for wider accessibility by the visually impaired. Also, early in the new financial year Blind SA will be appointing its CEO to oversee its future operations – all these developments point to a bright and exciting future for our organisation!

I conclude by quoting ***“Volunteering is not a choice, it's a responsibility”*** - **Ashley E. Hyder.**

**Cathy Donaldson** (President)

## MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



**Mr Jace Nair**

It is an honour and privilege as the recently appointed CEO of Blind SA in assisting to compile the Annual Report

with contributions from the President, Chairpersons of Committees, Managers, Heads of Department and other key staff. The Annual Report highlights the achievements of the previous financial year.

Our vision for the current year and for the next five years will be reflected in the Strategic Plan 2016-2021. The operational management strategy includes the setting up of three divisions; Administration, Accessible Publications; and Training. The Administration will focus on Finance and Human Resources and Fundraising, Public Relations, Media and Communication. The Accessible Publications will include DAISY Transcription Services and Multi Media

Production (DAISY formats, Braille soft and hard copy, audio {text to speech and human narration}, large print, e-copy and text). Training will focus on Orientation and Mobility training, Braille training, Skills and Vocational training, computer training, Braille production training, employment placement).

Long term plans will be developed for the sustainability of the organisation.

May I also acknowledge the gratitude to donors, well-wishers, media, government (especially Department of Arts and Culture), volunteers, members and staff for their continued support and contributions to ensure the work of Blind SA to empower visually impaired persons is strengthened.

**Jace Nair** (CEO)

## TREASURER'S ANNUAL REPORT



**Mr Derick Greeff**

The Executive Committee appoints a Finance and Human Resources Committee (FHR) every two years with the Treasurer as the Chairperson and two additional members and the relevant staff representation. The powers and function of the FHR is to develop, review and monitor financial policy, financial controls and oversight, approve the budget and financial statements including the audited financial statements as well as oversight of all aspects of human resource management. Listed below is a brief highlight of the past financial year.

### Meetings

The Committee held meetings on:-

19 November 2015 (face to face meeting)

### Important decisions/resolutions taken

Recommended the Budget 2015-2016 for adoption on 17 March 2015 and reviewed and adjusted on 19 November 2015.

Reviewed monthly, quarterly and annual financial reports for the year ended 31 March 2016.

Approved the Annual Audited Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2016 on 16 July 2016 for adoption.

### Report on Annual Financial Statements

Annual financial statements were prepared by Ria Vermaak (CFO) and audited by Mahdi Meyer Steyn Chartered Accountants Inc.

Starting with the income statement, which is now called "Statement of Surplus or Deficit and other Comprehensive Income", we see that it is divided into four sections. These deal with revenue income, then the cost incurred to achieve this revenue (cost of sales) with a gross profit or (loss) on this activity.

Other income and the operating expenses with the operating surplus/(deficit) then follow.

As an overall picture, we see that total income was at R19,573,126 compared to R18,232,718 for 2015 and compared to R17,121,825 for 2014.

Expenditure for the same period was R20,354,819 compared to R19,767,650 for 2015 and compared to R18,010,822 for 2014.

Leaving a deficit of R-781,693 and a loan of R725 000 from SABWO Trust compared to a deficit of R-1,534,932 for

2015 and compared to a deficit of R-888,997 for 2014.

Further detailed information appears in the Audited Financial Statements at the end of this Annual Report.

I trust you will find the above information informative and that it will provide you with a broad outline of the financial status of Blind SA.

**Derick Greeff** (Treasurer)

## ANNUAL OPERATIONAL REPORT

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



*The Blind SA Executive*

The Executive Committee executes the instructions and implements the resolutions of the Head Committee (General Assembly). When the Head Committee (General Assembly) is not in session, the Executive Committee shall act in urgent matters.

#### Meetings

Meetings were held on the following dates:

18 July 2015

23 November 2015

06 February 2016

16 February 2016

#### Highlights

The Executive Committee:

Hosted the Head Committee (General Assembly) meeting on 25-26 September 2015 with nineteen member organisations participating;

Approved the reports from the Advocacy and Information Committee; Braille Committee; Education and ECD Committee; Employment Committee; Finance and Human Resource Committee; Legal and Constitutions Committee; Ad Hoc Committee and Screening Committee;

Received reports from staff and monitored the operations of Blind SA's projects and activities;

Resolved to appoint a CEO for Blind SA and the appointment of Jace Nair as CEO who took office on 1 June 2016.

## New Organisations

The Executive Committee launched 5 new member organisations:

**Sisonke Inclusion for the Blind** – 28 October 2015

**Ekangala Blind SA** – 21 November 2015

**Bonisani Blind SA** – 30 January 2015

**Kom Kyk Time** – 28 February 2016

**Success Association for the Blind** – 11 June 2016

*Cathy Donaldson* (President)

## ADVOCACY AND INFORMATION



*Dr Praveena Sukhraj-Ely*

The Committee was involved in numerous advocacy and information dissemination initiatives during the 2015-2016 reporting period. Various issues ranging from accessible websites, accessible banking and access to justice and the courts received attention. The Committee recognizes the importance of building partnerships with other non-governmental organisations, government departments and the private sector, and hence collaborated and networked with the National Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, the Department of Telecommunications and Postal Services, the Department of Social Development, the South African National Council for the Blind, the Banking Association of South Africa, the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS), the

South African Disability Alliance (SADA) and Gold Reef City, to mention but a few.

### MEETINGS

There were two meetings held by the Committee during the reporting period. They were held on the 22nd of August 2015, and the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January 2016.

### The Department of Public Works Forum

Blind SA formed a partnership with the DPW and agreed to be part of the Department of Public Works Advisory Forum. Mr. Netshituni and Ms Donaldson attended meetings of the Forum. No meetings were held after February 2015, however, a Memorandum of Understanding was entered into between the DPW and Blind SA on issues surrounding employment.

### Inter-Sectoral Committee – Task Team on Equal Access to Justice for Persons with Disabilities

Following the National Round Table for persons with disabilities held in November 2014, an inter-sectoral committee task team was established in July 2015. The objective of the inter-sectoral committee was to draft a “Best Practice Court Services Model to be applicable to Court Users and Victims with Disabilities.”

Mr Ntshavheni Netshituni was asked to join the inter-sectoral committee on behalf



of Blind SA. Three meetings were held and were attended by Mr Netshituni, namely, the 31<sup>st</sup> August, 29<sup>th</sup> October 2015 and the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016.

*A Draft of the Best Practice Court Services Model* was compiled by the Department of Justice with the inputs and assistance of the inter-sectoral committee. The work of the task team is to continue with converting the Draft Model into Regulations and a Code of Good Practice is under way.

### **Distribution of the South African Constitution and Other Public Educational Material in Braille**

The *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* and other public education material was converted into braille by the Department of Justice. The Department distributed copies of the Constitution and public education booklets to Blind SA and Blind SA distributed same to its members at its General Assembly in September 2015.

### **2016 Local Elections**

A Round Table was held by the Independent Electoral Commission in February 2016. Mr Netshituni and Miss Donaldson attended on behalf of Blind SA. Blind SA is going to be in constant dialogue with the IEC and the SANCB on how to roll out voter education to blind people across the country on how to use the voting template. Mr. Netshituni will be an observer at the local elections.

### **The White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

The WPRPD was launched and circulated by the Department of Social Development at a Summit for Persons with Disabilities in March 2016. Blind SA was represented by

Mr Christo De Klerk and Mr. Ntshavheni Netshituni at the Summit.

### **ICT Forum of the Department of Telecommunications and Postal Services**

The ICT Forum was established in May 2015. One of its 4 chambers is the chamber for persons with disabilities. The Minister appointed Dr Sukhraj-Ely to be the Chair of the Chamber. Issues involving technology and its impact on the lives of persons with disabilities are discussed and investigated.

### **The Chamber consists of a working group which consists of 5 sub-committees.**

Miss Donaldson, Mr De Klerk and Mr Kruger are active members in the ICT Disability Chamber and its Working Group and sub-committees. The Chamber has met 3 times during the Reporting period and has done work in diverse areas including but not limited to education, audio description, consumer protection, accessibility of websites and 0 vat rating for assistive devices for persons with disabilities.

### **Meeting with the Airports Company South Africa (ACSA)**

A sub-committee consisting of Miss Donaldson, Mr Netshituni, Mr De Klerk and Mr Kruger was formed to discuss issues impacting blind people with ACSA. Some of these issues included, having a data base of guide dogs, training and sensitization of ACSA officials etc.

***Dr. Praveena Sukhraj-Ely*** (Chairperson)

## BRAILLE



***Mass production of free braille literature for distribution to readers***

While this was a quiet year for braille printing, we still managed to break the two million page mark. Also, we laid the foundations for expansion of our services to include Mathematics braille and DAISY production – both on which I will report on in the next year or two. Interesting times lie ahead, indeed!

### **Meetings**

The committee held one face-to-face meeting during the year under review on 20 February 2015.

### **Highlights**

#### **New Embosser**

During the year under review Blind SA acquired a new Interpoint 55 high speed braille embosser which was largely funded by the Department of Arts and Culture for which we wish to express our sincerest gratitude and appreciation. A cocktail function was held to celebrate the launch of the new embosser on 19 November 2015.

### **Braille Instructor**

Miss Tracy Smith, braille instructor, resigned and left our employ at the end of December 2015. Mr Ofentse Manyane was appointed in her place and took up employment at the end of February in order to attend lectures to obtain his accreditations.

### **Braille Training**

Apart from braille training provided by the braille instructor during employment, braille training of teachers was also conducted by the partnership of Blind SA and SA Braille Authority (SABA).

Four such training sessions took place during the year under review. Grade 1 braille training was presented at Thiboloha School during April. Grade 1, 2 and technical braille training was conducted at Khanyisa School for the three schools for the blind in the Eastern Cape in July. Grade 2 training took place at Bartimea School in October and Grade 1, 2 and technical training took place in Port Alfred for the three Eastern Cape schools again in January.

A total of 227 individuals and teachers were trained.

### **Braille School Textbooks**

There has still been no progress with the tender from the Department of Basic Education regarding production of workbooks, textbooks and LTSM for blind and partially sighted children at the twenty two Special Schools. Braille Services agreed to assist the Bartimele School by producing thirty nine titles in Sesotho, Setswana and English into braille, but not to charge master cost but only the remainder of the production cost.

## **LINDANDANDA Report**

The committee noted that the report had still not been implemented, but that a meeting had taken place between Department of Arts and Culture (DAC), Blind SA, SABA and the SANCB where DAC reported that the report was ready to be submitted to parliament for possible implementation. The committee expressed the view that the information contained in the report is by now already four years dated.

## **Duxbury Braille Translator**

After installation of the latest upgrade of the Duxbury Braille Translator some of the computers slowed down significantly which indicates that they are not powerful enough to handle the new software. They will probably have to be upgraded or replaced. At present Susan Van Wyk is creating a braille-to-print table for Tshivenda and Christo de Klerk is maintaining the braille-to-print table for Afrikaans.

## **Production of Technical Braille**

Braille Services took up the challenge to begin production of technical material in braille. They engaged with Prinshof to get pointers to initiate the process and found that a program called MathType seems to be the most appropriate one for math data capture. We now also have sufficiently skilled staff to undertake this new venture for us. This gives Braille Services the capacity to produce technical material in braille and makes it no longer necessary to outsource such work.

## **DAISY Production**

Another new venture Braille Services decided to embark upon is the production of material in Daisy format. Some of the reasons for this are that there is a decline in the demand for hardcopy braille, a trend

which will most likely increase as lower cost refreshable braille displays become available. A big advantage of Daisy is that multiple formats could be created on demand from the same source material. Daisy provides the reader with greater navigational features than any other format and is ideally suited for students and learners.

## **Braille Code Related Matters**

A number of braille code related matters were discussed and considered by the committee. One was about the use of the numeric passage indicator referred to countries by the International Council on English Braille (ICEB) Code Maintenance Committee. The use of this method does not have much support in non-technical material. Two matters are to be referred to the ICEB Code Maintenance Committee for consideration: one is assignment of a symbol to indicate column breaks and another is assignment of a symbol for the math symbol for approximately the same (three vertical lines in print) for which Pioneer printers suggest the braille sign dots 3-4-5-6, 3-4-5-6, 1-2-3.

## **Braille Production**

### **Master Page Production**

During the past year we produced 134 372 master pages (2014/15: 156 119 pages; 2013/14: 142 577 pages), a decrease of 14% on the previous year. This is made up by the following main categories:

Braille Magazines: 2 164 pages; 1.6%

Students & Individuals: 28 762 pages; 21.4%

School Text Books: 20 330 pages; 15.1% (in 9 African languages);

Government Information Brochures & Annual Reports: 8 255 pages; 6.1%

Blind SA Administration: 59 631 pages;  
44.4% (2014/15: 71 604 pages; 45.9%)

Other: 15 230 pages; 11.4%

### Duplication Page Production

Duplication pages showed an 18% decrease to 2 367 314 pages.

The statistics for the past few years look as follows:

2013/14	1 842 913
2014/15	2 883 764
2015/16	2 367 314

### Paper Sales

Paper sale figures are showing constant growth. With the difficulty to source local stock, we decided to replace flat-sheet Camelot 135gsm with Sun Offset 140gsm, a Chinese paper. We also changed the paper grade on our Interpoint high-speed reel embossers from the current Camelot 135gsm to Bristol Vellum 147gsm, sourced from Indonesia and the USA.

The increase in Sun Offset was as a result of export orders to a service provider in Swaziland and Enabling Services in Uganda.

### Braille Magazines

We produced five magazines for Blind SA (*Brailorama*, *Blind SA News*, *Braille Trumpet* and *Blind SA Youth Info* – monthly & *Braillorette* – bi-monthly).

All these magazines are supplied to readers free of charge. We had an 8% drop in subscribers and an 11% decrease in page output this year.

### Individuals and Students

Subsidized braille printing for individuals and students is our core business and this

year we produced 123 new documents/titles. Total duplication pages were 44 182 pages, of which 24 182 was college study material and various examination papers for Blind SA's Student Committee and other colleges and training institutions.



*Sipho Mashankane binding a braille booklet*

### Other Work

Braille business cards are becoming more and more popular and this year we produced cards for 132 persons, totaling 67 320 cards.

The 2016 braille calendar was again produced with 750 pocket and 500 standard-size copies being distributed to schools, organisations and individuals. We are currently the only producer of braille calendars in South Africa.

Another popular booklet was the Rugby World Cup 2015 and ABSA Currie Cup schedules which included a braille graphic representation of a rugby field with dimensions and player positions.

### SABA

Blind SA's delegation consisting of Cathy Donaldson, Susan Bam, Susan van Wyk and Johannes Dube attended the SABA General Assembly in Worcester on 28-29 May 2015. At that occasion Alan Subban, Chief Director, in the Department of Basic Education made presentations dealing



with school textbooks and the road ahead, but by the time of this writing nothing has yet come of it.

### **ICEB**

The Committee noted that the 6<sup>th</sup> ICEB General Assembly would take place during May 2016 in Baltimore, USA. SABA appointed a delegation of four members consisting of Ntshavheni Netshituni, Pasha Alden, Susan van Wyk and Johannes Dube. Unfortunately the latter two delegates were unable to obtain funding to cover their cost of attendance, but the other two managed to secure funding, Ntshavheni Netshituni being funded mainly by DAC and partly by Unisa. Christo De Klerk has been nominated for the position of President of ICEB for the next quadrennial period.

### **AFUB**

The 6<sup>th</sup> African Forum for the Blind was held at the Speke Resort, Kampala, Uganda during October 2015 with the conference theme “Beyond 2015: Delivering on the agenda for persons with visual impairments in Africa”. Cathy Donaldson, Christo de Klerk, Philip Jordaan, Susan Bam and Sanette Jordaan attended and we made valuable contacts – we even landed an export order for braille paper to Enabling Services, a Ugandan service provider in the disability field. Susan Bam presented a paper titled “why it is difficult to move from a policy of mainstreaming to a policy of Inclusion” and Christo de Klerk made a presentation on “Unified English Braille”.

### **Conclusion**

This past year was another very successful year for Braille Services. We must acknowledge the leading role played by Blind SA’s governance and the Braille Committee and hard work performed by our dedicated staff, while special mention must be made of the continued support we receive from the Department of Arts and Culture. We must also express gratitude to our Heavenly Father who made this all possible.

Braille Services’ mission states that “we will supply quality braille to blind people in the language of their choice at an affordable price” and we are looking forward to 2016/17 to fulfil this mandate through dedication and hard work.



*Mr Christo de Klerk, chairperson of Egoli Blind, handing over a white cane to a learner from Sibonile School*

### **Christo de Klerk** (Chairperson)

*The report was consolidated with inputs from Philip Jordaan (Manager) Braille Services; Tracy Smith (Braille Trainer); Ofentse Manyane (Braille Trainer) and Christo de Klerk (Chairperson: Braille Committee)*



## EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT



*Ms Susan Bam*

Again the Education and early Childhood Development Committee had a busy year. I must admit that all our projects were not successful. Here, I want to mention the adult matric exams, but I still believe that we must get a solution for this problem. We tried to help as much as possible and we tried our best. Only 5 Of the Schools have Grade 12 material available in Braille, which they produce by themselves.

### Meetings

A telephone conference on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September 2015 and a physical meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2016 were held.

### 6TH AFRICA FORUM

Susan Bam was privileged to attend the 6 African Forum in Uganda where she presented a paper titled “why it is difficult to move from a policy of mainstreaming to a policy of Inclusion”. It was a very well organised conference. Although our Education in South Africa is in a terrible state, there are countries worse off than we are. South Sudan needs help urgently, but nobody wants to get involved with the government. I get the same feeling about South Africa. ICEVI does wonderful work,

but they would not get involved in politics of countries.

### Learner Assistance Programme

Four pre-school children, five school learners, two learners who are too old for a school and seven adult learners were assisted during this financial year.

For this project there was Enquiries from seventeen young people during this financial year. There will always be a need for this program, because some learners did not have Braille books at school, or they got sick or were in an accident at high school level.

### SECTION 27

Section 27 report, “Left in the Dark”, on the twenty two Special Schools, was launched on 18 November 2015. Cathy Donaldson, Christo de Klerk, Derick Greeff, Ntshavheni Netshituni and Susan Bam were present at launch of the report in Cape Town. The report is available in Braille and large print from Section 27.

Susan Bam was present at the meeting with the Education portfolio committee of the Parliament on 8 March 2016. The Organisations that attended were Section 27, SABA, Blind SA, SANCB, Human Rights Watch and Inclusive Education SA. Human Rights Watch pointed out the difficulties to register learners with disabilities in schools and the long waiting lists. It was recorded that 600 000 learners with disabilities do not attend schools in South Africa. The Department of Basic Education was very upset about this finding, but it was pointed out to them that it was found on their website.

*Susan Bam* (Chairperson)

## EMPLOYMENT



*Mr Abraham Allies*

This report will be the last for the term of this committee and I wish i could share some good news to the readers, but the challenges with the high rate of unemployment in our visually impaired community still remain. The employment of a permanent placement officer at Blind SA could change the situation but until now our dreams did not materialise.

The committee's main focus is on placements, job readiness training, etc.

### **Meetings**

One Committee meeting was held during the year namely: 19 March 2016.

During this meeting it was decided that the cut-off age for jobseekers will be fifty years of age as it will be difficult to place persons above this age.

Meetings with external stakeholders also took place;

In November 2015, the chairperson met with an employee responsible for recruitment at AMS Haden in Roodepoort.

This meeting have the result of 1 blind lady been placed at the mentioned company in January 2016.

### **Database of Jobseekers**

There are 170 jobseekers on the database.

You will notice that the database has shrunken after the employment committee took a decision in March 2016 that the cut-off age for jobseekers will be fifty years as was mentioned above.

The total of persons looking for employment is still very high and there are some that is waiting for years to be employed.

### **Gauteng Skills Development Forum:**

The chairperson of the Employment Committee and employees from Blind SA attend 3 workshops of the Gauteng Skills Development Forum.

The Forum consist of government departments in Gauteng, municipalities, business, labour unions, SETA's, the disability sector and community base organizations.

The Gauteng City Region Academy and Department of Economic Development co-chair all meetings.

The SADA and SAHRC workshop on the right to work for persons with disabilities:

The chairperson of the Employment Committee attended the workshop on behalf of Mr. de Klerk who is the representative of Blind SA on SADA.

The workshop was to get inputs for the development of a toolkit and a monitoring framework for the private sector. SADA was organizing the workshops on behalf of

the SAHRC to get all stakeholders involve. The idea is to guide the private sector on how to employ persons with disabilities and at the same time monitoring their progress.

### **Presentation to the Transformation Conference SA:**

A transformation conference which supposed to take place in March 2016 is postponed to 12 July 2016. Mr. Allies will do a presentation on inclusion of persons with disabilities in the South African economy”.

### **Placements**

During the year six persons were placed in the government and in the private sector.

Several jobseekers are busy with learnership and internship programmes at various government departments, municipalities and at financial institutions in the private sector.

### **Partnerships**

Partnership with DWDE (Disability Workshop Development Enterprise)

A memorandum of understanding will be sign between Blind SA and DWDE as soon as the Legal and Constitutions Committee finalize the document and inputs from the 2 organizations has been discussed and incorporated into the document.

*Abraham Allies* (Chairperson)

## **HUMAN RESOURCES**

Appointments/Resignations/Retirement/-  
Expiry of Contracts

Appointments: 6

Resignations: 3

Retirements: 2

Expiry of contracts: 2

Mrs Gloria de Koker retired on 30 April 2015 after serving for 10 years

Mrs Lauren Hallcrow retired on 29 February 2016 after serving for 12 years

### **Employment Statistics**

**(Statistics as at 31 March 2015)**

Number of staff employed: 45

Number of Black Staff: 32

Number of Women Staff: 27

Number of Staff with disability: 11

Number of staff who fall within the youth group (between the ages of 18 to 35 years): 9

### **Staff Development and Training**

**(Statistics as at 31 March 2016)**

Number of staff trained: 13

Black staff trained: 7

Women staff trained:  
11

Staff with disabilities trained: 1

Number of staff who falls within the youth group trained (between the ages of 18 to 35 years): 2

*The report was compiled from information received from Nadia Gxasheka (Human Resources)*

## NEWSLETTERS AND MAGAZINES

The Organisation compiles, edits and distributes two newsletters on a monthly basis, two magazines on a monthly basis, one magazine on a bimonthly basis and two newsletters on a biannual basis.

The Blind SA News is a monthly edition distributed in braille, print and electronically. The newsletter is edited by André Vosloo and has a circulation of 765 subscribers.

Braille Trumpet is edited by Johannes Dube and is circulated in English with an African-language annexure. The Braille Trumpet has 400 Braille and electronic subscriptions.

Braillorama is a monthly magazine with articles of a general nature distributed to 277 subscribers in Braille. The Braillorette is a bimonthly magazine focusing on blindness related articles and has a circulation of 431. Both these magazines are edited by Christo de Klerk, assisted by Philip Jordaan and Martie de Klerk supplies a monthly recipe for publication in the Braillorama.



**Braille proofreading is done by a visually impaired braille reader, teaming up with her print copy holder. Pictured here is Miriam Nevondo (print) and Nomsa Mukwevho (braille)**

Our Parent Newsletter is edited by Retha Stassen and has a circulation of 187 subscribers in electronic format and in print. The newsletter concentrates on articles that may be of interest of parents of children with a visual impairment and early childhood development.

The Youth Magazine is edited by Tracy Smith and is targeted at the blind and partially sighted youth. The magazine has a circulation of 480 monthly subscriptions in braille and electronic format.

Two Donor Newsletters focus on articles that reflect upon beneficiaries and services to empower blind and partially sighted persons and is sent to over forty thousand donors, supporters and well wishers. These newsletters are sent out in print and electronic format during February and September annually.

*The report was consolidated with inputs from André Vosloo (Editor: Blind SA Newsletter); Johannes Dube (Editor: Braille Trumpet); Christo de Klerk (Editor: Braillorama and Braillorette); Philip Jordaan (Assistant); Retha Stassen (Editor: Parent Newsletter) and Tracy Smith (Editor: Youth Magazine)*



**Johannes Dube, African-language braille specialist and editor of Braille Trumpet magazine**



## FUNDRAISING

***“Once you choose hope, anything is possible” – Christopher Reeve***

Our goal is to help as many blind and visually impaired South Africans as possible to live independently and with dignity. In achieving that, the greatest assets that we have are friends and partners who understand our mission. It is and will continue to be our strength. We are simply so grateful for that.

We are truly humbled by the fact that there are donors who have stuck with us through very tough economic times.

Although there is still much to be done, there has been a definite improvement in that the needs of our visually impaired people are being heeded and addressed more and more. None of these changes would have been remotely possible without the assistance and partnerships that have been formed with our donors who have year after year selflessly supported us.

Thank you for understanding, for joining in on our vision and for your much valued and appreciated assistance along the way and THANK YOU for lighting up the faces of those whose lives have been changed and who have been given hope and now have a reason to believe.

The school awareness programme is to make sighted learners aware of blind people - how they live with their blindness, how they would like to be treated and "that a blind person is not different from a sighted person, they just can't see", and more importantly, that it can happen to anyone and at any time. We also highlight the importance of caring for your eyesight and that if you are aware that your sight might have deteriorated for whatever reason, to seek immediate help.



***Reading and writing braille is the only way a blind person can obtain literacy***

Ten schools were visited where our services to the different institutions and organisations was highlighted so as to make people aware of braille production, braille training, orientation and mobility training , and assistive devices.

Visited fifteen Old Age Homes and Retirement Villages, three churches and participated in four expos.

### **Embrio Fundraising Project**

Two Donor Recruitment, three Donor Supporter Campaigns and two Donor Newsletters are sent out annually to donors. Through these efforts we were able to acquire 10 598 donors and 1 418 regular donors continued their gifts to Blind SA during the course of the year.

### **Corporate, Trusts and Foundations**

During the past year 148 corporates, trusts and foundations supported the various projects and activities of Blind SA.



## Bequest

Ten bequests were received with a total value of R231 746.00

## Fundraising activities and income

Activities	Income (R)
------------	------------

Direct Mail Appeals	5 282 112.18
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(Donor Acquisition, Donor Renewal, Nurturing and maintenance)

Corporates	647 515.00
------------	------------

Trusts and Foundations	222 217.17
------------------------	------------

Individuals	164 707.73
-------------	------------

New Donations	53 540.00
---------------	-----------

Bequests	231 746.00
----------	------------

## Special Events:

Casual Day	15 915.00
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Tin Collections	8 713.12
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Recipe Book	100.00
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Schools	15 085.90
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Given Gain	17 473.68
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Churches	5 772.30
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*The report was consolidated with inputs from Karin Gouws, Sanette Jordaan and Ria Vermaak.*



***Learners from Sibonile Special School with their Blind SA-donated Perkins braille writers***

## SERVICES TO VISUALLY IMPAIRED PERSONS



*Annah Mohale demonstrating her white cane skills!*

### ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY TRAINING

The beginning of a long journey is to take the first step, with the limited resources that we have at Blind SA we did not wait, in order to reach out to the community but we are making a change in the lives of the blind people in their own communities.

Below are the names of provinces, number of clients reached and trained and the number of canes given to clients by Blind SA:

#### **Areas covered: (O & M training)**

Gauteng Province - 84

North West Province - 123

Total: 207

#### **Name of Institution - Number of participants**

National Dept. of Energy Pretoria - 15

(Skills: Coping better with blind people in the work place; Basic O & M Skills)

### **AWARENESS CAMPAIGN**

Awareness campaign was held in North West Province in October 2015 and was blessed by the present of acting deputy director special programme and Chief Director of the Department of Health.



*Susan van Wyk, braille technical advisor, with Yolanda Morison*

### **BRAILLE TRAINING**

A total of 227 individuals and teachers were trained. The list below indicates the institutions and number of persons trained.

Johannesburg School for the Blind - 14 children

NOBSA - 5 adults

Individual students - 18 adults

North West Department of Education  
(Christiana) - 20 teachers and officials  
Eastern Cape Department of Education  
(PE) - 66 teachers and officials  
Eastern Cape Department of Education  
(Port Alfred) - 66 teachers and officials  
Free State Department of Education  
(Bloemfontein) - 38 teachers and officials

### **BLIND SA'S MEMBERSHIP**

Number of Members as on 31 March  
2016: 925



*Susan Bam (Education Committee chairperson)  
and Cathy Donaldson (President) with some  
bursary recipients*

### **BURSARY APPLICATIONS**

Nearly 200 bursary application forms were  
sent to prospective students and learning  
institutions. A total of R925 000.00 was  
paid out to prospective students during  
2015/2016 financial year.

New bursaries: 107  
Continuation bursaries: 18  
Training bursaries: 4  
Total amount of bursaries: 129

### **SPECIAL LOANS**

Number of new loans: 5  
Total amount of new loans: R34 380.00  
Continuation loans: 16  
Total amount for loans: R109 628.72



*A variety of assistive devices distributed by Blind  
SA*

### **ASSISTIVE DEVICES**

Value of assistive devices delivered:  
R55 332.50  
Value of canes & tips sold: R51 853.73  
Braille Paper sold: R1 720.00

*This report was consolidated with inputs  
from Walter Simethi, Johnson Mdluli,  
Gilbert Mangwekea, Sharon Ahmed, Tracy  
Smith, Ofentse Manyane, Ria Vermaak  
and Hendrika van der Merwe.*

## LOUIS BRAILLE

### 4 January 1809- 6 January 1852

Louis Braille was born on 4 January 1809 in the small French town of Coupvray, about 40 km from Paris. He was the youngest of 4 children. His father was the town's harness maker and black-smith, and although not rich people, they were a happy family. As a small child, Louis used to play in his father's workshop. One day he took a small pruning-knife and tried to cut a piece of leather, and being only three years old, the knife slipped and pierced his eye. Infection set in, and soon he was totally blind. At first he attended the local school with his sisters, and because there was no written language for the blind, he had to learn everything by heart. He proved to be a very gifted student, and in 1819 his parents decided to send him to the only school for the blind in Europe at that time, the Institution des Jeunes Aveugles in Paris.

During this time a certain Charles Barbier, a captain in the French artillery, invented various systems of embossed writing to be used by soldiers to enable them to read and write at night. The first chart with Barbier's phonetic signs (called "Sonographie Barbier"), and a ruler which was used to write this, was produced in 1822. During December 1823 he gave a demonstration at Louis Braille's school, and his idea immediately caught the attention of Louis. He set out to simplify the system and devised the 26 letters of the alphabet, punctuation signs, numbers and elementary mathematical symbols.

In 1827 Louis wrote his first handbook, "La grammaire des grammaires", in his own revised system. He became a teacher in his school, wrote his first music notation in 1829 and produced two geography works, "Gographie de l'Asie" and "Gographie de la France," in 1832.

At the age of 26 Louis contracted tuberculosis for which there was no cure at that time. This, together with the poor living conditions and over-crowding at the school, led to his untimely death on 6 January 1852. His remains were laid to rest in his native village of Coupvray from where it was moved during 1952, one century after his death, to be reburied in the Pantheon, the highest honour France can bestow on its citizens.

## The Braille Alphabet

a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j
⠁	⠃	⠉	⠑	⠗	⠋	⠎	⠈	⠊	⠘

k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t
⠅	⠇	⠓	⠉	⠕	⠏	⠖	⠗	⠚	⠞

u	v	w	x	y	z
⠠	⠡	⠣	⠤	⠥	⠦

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0
⠼	⠾	⠿	⠽	⠻	⠼	⠼	⠼	⠼	⠼