COMMUNICATION SUPPORT WORLD NETWORK NEWSLETTER
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www.centralcoastchildrensfoundation.org

[EDITORS' NOTE: WELCOME TO THE DECEMBER 2015 EDITION OF CSWN
Since the beginning of publication in 2009, the newsletter has grown, broadened its reach, and quintupled its readership. This issue provides greater breadth of coverage and contains more practical and useful information on relevant topics than ever before. You'll read about an exciting new video produced by our colleagues in Mexico City, updates on the introduction of new low-tech assistive technology tools in schools for children in Malawi and preschoolers in Uganda, descriptions of the very beginnings of speech therapy and augmentative communication in Vietnam, a wide variety of resources focusing on the use of tablets and the availability of new apps for children with communication challenges, and the creative work pursued by students with severe disabilities commenting musically to advocate for accessible toilets. You'll also read about AAC and AT meetings and gatherings across the globe. Our coverage describes activities and resources relevant to assistive technology in emerging areas from six different continents.]

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RESOURCES FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN RURAL UGANDA
by Katie Lampe

Editor's note: In our 2015 Special Issue on Special Education in Sub-Saharan Africa, Katie Lampe, a CCCF staff member, wrote about Nathan Muwereza and his Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), African Community Team Support. Nathan runs a local NGO that provides affordable preschool education for children in the area. This update describes Katie's recent return to Uganda and her visit to Nathan and his school.

I first met Nathan when I volunteered with his NGO in the summer of 2014. I then returned in January of 2015 with donations of books, school supplies, educational toys, Kindles, a tablet, and a solar powered flashlight from the CCCF foundation in Monterey, California. I also purchased a solar charger locally in Nathan's town of Mbale from a vendor of a Company (Fenix International), which is based in San Francisco.

Of all the items that we bought, Nathan feels that the solar charger is the most useful. It allows him to charge his phones, the tablet, Kindles, and the lights that came with the charger enable his family to see at night. He has saved over 30% on his electricity bill thanks to the solar charger, which is still working perfectly.

Rooftop solar technology, which has become increasingly popular and affordable in "developed" countries, is still out of reach for most families in developing countries. Also, current, affordable solar chargers don't have the capacity to power refrigerators, air conditioners, or other large appliances. Think about how entire villages and towns could change if they had affordable, reliable access to power. Businesses could stay open later, children could study into the evening without relying on dangerous candles or harmful kerosene lamps, and families could charge electronics at home without having to pay for transport into town, and then paying again to use a charging station. It is important to appreciate the impact of a few simple lights when a family is unconnected to a reliable power grid.

Solar technology also has an added benefit. The company where I bought Nathan's solar charger, Fenix International, is developing a new kind of credit for the 2.2 billion adults who do not yet use traditional banking services. This enables Nathan and others to pay for their solar charges over time. Some enterprising entreprenurs are already providing solar power that others can use to charge their phones for a small amount.

Nathan reported that the children loved the toys and preferred picture books to books without pictures. He also said that the Kindles were particularly popular with teachers, who viewed them essentially as tablets. Nathan explained that teachers only let the children use the Kindles with assistance because they can't yet read independently. I also noticed during my visit that adults in Uganda seem to have an acute fear that children may "spoil" new things and are worried about replacing a Kindle if a child were to break it. This currently limits the children's ability to explore and learn independently. We are learning more about the role different technologies might play in developing countries. We will continue to experiment (and sometimes fail) to find out what works and what doesn't.

If you're interested in communicating with Nathan, you can reach him at his new email address: nathanmuwereza@yahoo.co.uk

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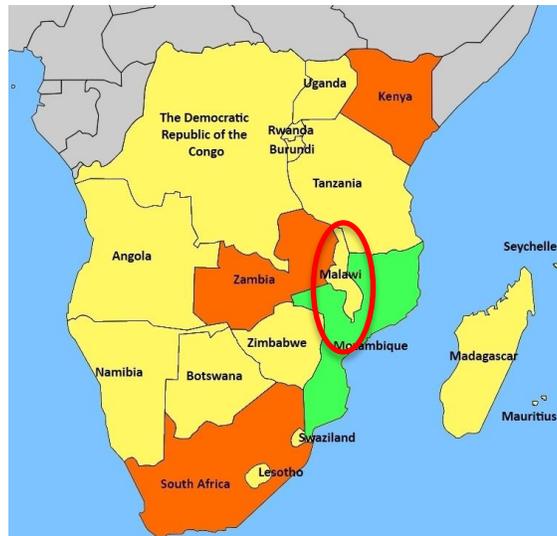
INTRODUCING NEW RESOURCES IN A MALAWI SCHOOL FOR YOUNG CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

by Katie Lampe

[Editor's note: In the last several issues of this newsletter, we've talked about Victor Musowa, who runs a school for children with disabilities in the Blantyre region of Malawi. Victor is currently in Canada to receive a prestigious alumni award from a local college, and our reporter had the opportunity to talk to him to learn more about the work that he does, and about how some recent donations from our foundation are benefiting the children in his school.]

Victor Musowa first got interested in the topics of rehabilitation and therapy when he took a rehabilitation course in Malawi in the early 2000s. Working with Canadian speech and language therapist in Malawi further ignited his interest in the topic. After seeking funding to go to school to study communications, he was able to attend a yearlong program at the Georgian College in Canada from 2005-2006.

Three years ago, he started a school, which is now an NGO called The Able Kids Foundation. Victor began with only 11 students. Now there are 89 children during the school week, with an additional 241 children on the waiting list ranging in age from five months to twelve years old. When possible, Victor prefers to admit babies so they can receive the maximum benefits of early intervention therapy. To meet the high demand for services, the school has started opening on weekends to allow children on the waiting list to come with their parents so they can read, play and receive stimulation.

Victor has big plans for the school. He is in the process of trying to secure funding to build a larger facility to incorporate more students. He wants to build a "proper" and nice school building with classrooms on one side and therapy rooms (gym, occupational therapy room) on the other. He wants to have an accessible playground in the middle. Once the school is "properly established" in Blantyre, Victor hopes to advocate for other schools

across Malawi. (Recently, Victor was elected to the Malawi Parlement.)

In a previous issue of this newsletter, we discussed the "12 Chairs" Project. It is now called the "24 Chairs and Counting" project. The initial Project funded the local construction of12 special therapy chairs so children with disabilities could sit up at school. A second grant funded 12 more chairs. There were sent home, so the children could sit up and interact with family and friends, instead of lying on a mat all day. (Reportedly, when some students come to school for the first time, they have virtually no hair on the back of their heads because they have spent most of their life lying on their backs.). The therapy chairs are so popular there is continuing demand for more. Also the outcomes are very promising. Some children who were using them are now able to sit up on their own without support.

Last summer, the Central Coast Children's Foundation sent a variety of educational resources to Malawi. Donations included Kindle Fires (which function essentially like tablets and were loaded with books and educational apps), a tablet, a LeapFrog children's educational tablet, a large number of children's books, four separate educational kits from a special needs school in Pretoria, South Africa, called Pathways, and importantly, a solar charger system to help keep the electronic devices running.

Victor has found most of the items to be very valuable. Like Nathan in Uganda, Victor especially likes the solar charger. He said it's "so nice." The battery is very light, and charges all the devices (Kindles, tablet, etc.) at the same time. There are also four lights that can go in four different rooms. Electricity is not normally reliable in the area.

Victor also reported that the LeapFrog tablet is very popular among the children, and is especially useful for kids with behavior problems. He says that the songs and games help the children stay focused. The Kindles are also helpful because they have lots of books loaded in them. However, the tablet has limited utility at the moment because there is no wifi access at the school. He noted that the Pathways Toolbox kits from South Africa were, perhaps, the most useful item we sent because they contain a variety of literacy and numeracy activities, and help staff assess the children's skills. You can find out more about Pathways and their Toolboxes kits here.

What has the CCCF learned so far from Victor in Malawi and Nathan in Uganda? To start with, solar chargers are proving essential for keeping electronics charged in areas that frequently lose power. E-readers and educational apps can provide a wide range of resources that many schools do not have access to. However, wifi access is limited so it is difficult to use the full capacity of tablet-like devices. It is important to send devices that can be used with a modem and that modems are available.

Most importantly, we have learned that the same electronic learning tools that are so popular in developed countries, are also useful in emerging areas. [Editor's Note: *Earlier articles for Malawi and Uganda can be found in previous issues of our newsletter HERE and HERE.*]
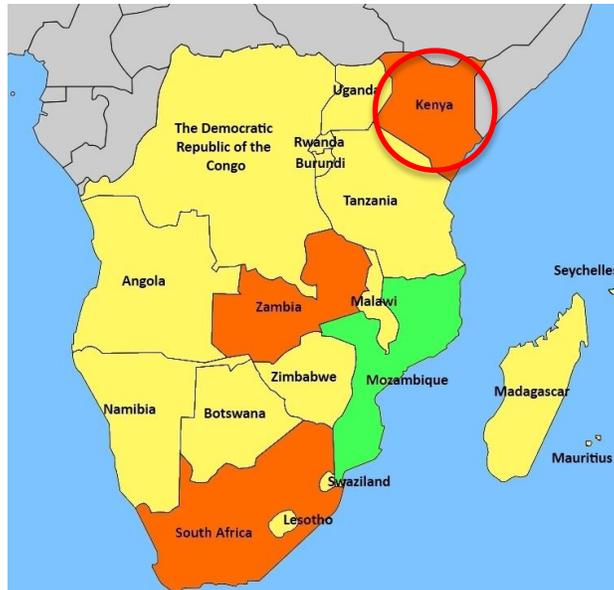
YELLOW HOUSE CHILDREN'S SERVICES IN KENYA
SUMMER UPDATES – JULY 2015

by Rachel Dickinson

Yellow House Children's Services provides speech and language therapy services for individuals with communication disability in Western Kenya in collaboration with locally registered Community Based Organizations. They offer family-centered care and through family education and inter-professional cooperation, the Yellow House team seeks long-term and sustainable results. The Yellow House staff works closely with parents and caregivers to help them understand the importance of interaction, play and communication. Staff carefully models HOW to interact and communicate during everyday activities, encouraging parents/caregivers to spend time with their child and teaches them how to model communication behaviors.

Child rearing practices differ around the world. In in Western Kenya it is not typical for a child to receive adult attention other than during feeding and bathing. With help from Yellow House staff, children with disabilities are now learning the basic skills they need to communicate. Just as importantly, their caregivers are fully involved in the process.
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These pictures show mothers interacting with their children.

- Mama Clinton said, "I didn't know how to cope with Clinton's behaviors before speech and language therapy, now I know how to play with him, and he understands when I give him instructions. Now, I understand how he communicates."

- Ten-month old Olga suddenly stopped responding to sound. She was soon diagnosed with a hearing loss and fitted with hearing aids. However, she didn't start speaking right away. Her parents were concerned because of her behavioral issues and tantrums. After a referral to Yellow House, Olga's parents began to appreciate the complexity of development. Olga's mother explained that she had a hard time understanding that for Olga, learning to communicate would take time.

- Six-year-old Ian's grandparents are his primary caregivers. Ian is essentially non-verbal and his grandparents didn't know why he wasn't speaking. They overheard a lady talking about a 'speech doctor' that was helping her child communicate. So Ian's grandparents followed the lady's advice and went to Yellow House. Yellow House staff noted "our first "word of mouth" referral was from a parent".

Yellow House partners with *Chance for Childhood* and *KUAP (Kisumu Urban Apostolate Project)* to train therapists in inclusive education and communication impairments. Their staff will soon begin to conduct a pilot research study. The project will investigate the needs of children who live and work on the street to determine whether some of these children might require special education and/or communication services.. To learn more please visit the Yellow House website.

EASTERN AND CENTRAL EUROPEAN REGIONAL AAC CONFERENCES
by Dot Fraser

The Purpose of ECERAAC conferences
People from Eastern and Central Europe are often unable to attend ISAAC's Biennial conferences because of the costs and long travel distances. As a result, they decided to organize their own conference for encouraging emerging AAC countries so they could share their experiences and support the development of AAC in the region.

In 1997 the Hungarian Bliss Foundation held the first ECERAAC conference in Budapest, Hungary. Since then five more countries have joined the line of hosts: Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, Russia and Ukraine. The group in Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland have each organized two conferences. A goal for the conference is to involve more new countries every year. This year the conference was hosted in the Republic of Moldova. The conference theme was: "Non- verbal Communication as a Means of Achieving Social and Human Rights."

10th Biennial Eastern and Central European Regional Conference on Augmentative and Alternative Communication; 12-14 October 2015, venue Chisinau, Republic of Moldova

[The Government of Republic of Moldova, Non-governmental Association Curtea Publica of Moldova, State Pedagogical University Ion Creangă Chișinău, Association for Persons with Mental Disabilities „Humanitas," Association of Children and Youth with Disabilities of Moldova „VITA"]

A Preconference day of workshops on Bliss symbols was provided by Margareda Jennisch, a speech-language pathologist and associate professor at Uppsalla Univesity in Sweden. ("Blissymbolics as AAC: An Introduction to the Bliss Language")

The aim of the conference was to discuss current problems regarding communication for children and adults with disabilities and to consider the opportunities and prospects foraugmentative and alternative communication approaches to foster socialization and human rights for children and adults with disabilities.

Conference presentations from the Republic of Moldova, Armenia, Hungary, Norway, Poland, Scotland, Sweden, Romania and Ukraine covered a wide range of topics relevant to the region. Several highlighted the changes and progress made over the past 30 years related to implementation of United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. Others discussed ways to develop AAC and how to foster collaborations among participants. The conference also resulted in representatives from Eastern and Central European nations forming an official Board for the ongoing ECER AAC conference series.

Conference round table discussions and idea-sharing

Many discussions focused on ways to make connections between developed and developing AAC countries in accordance with ISAAC's mission and vision.

Greetings from conference delegates to all our AAC friends and colleagues around the world

As a member of ISAAC BUILD subcommittee for Europe, I supplied information on ISAAC BUILD activities at *Communication Matters,* the yearly Conference of ISAAC's United Kingdom chapter. Communication Matters and ISAAC's BUILD European subcommittee have now agreed to collaborate in ways that strengthen and expand projects underway in Eastern and Central Europe. These groups also plan to establish connections with the official organizing committee of the Eastern and Central Europe Regional AAC conferences.

Announcement: 11th biennial ECERAAC conference " Spread the Word! Make Changes!"
4-7 July 2017, Bucharest, Romania.

DEVELOPMENT OF AAC AND ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY IN MALTA
by Marica Gatt

During the past decade, a number of government entities and non-governmental organisations in Malta have initiated efforts to provide access to communication and learning through the use of assistive technology. In 2006, Malta established the first AAC assessment centre with goals to identify and support students who could benefit from using AAC aids, strategies, techniques and technologies.

Most Maltese children with a "statement of needs" attend mainstream schools and have an individual educational plan that enables them to access assistive technology, depending on the availability of school funds. Students in special education receive speech-language therapy on a regular basis and have access to a wide range of devices and software programs to support learning.

Funding for the acquisition of assistive technology depends on a formal application to the Assistive Apparatus Service. At times, families have to rely on charities or find other ways to fund communication systems.

In 2007 the Maltese Government signed the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability* and publised *the Inclusive Curriculum Project*. It consists of 15 syllabus supplements and covers subjects taught at Primary and Secondary schools in Malta and helps educators learn to create differentiated teaching and learning situations so that all students, irrespective of their developmental ages and cognitive abilities, have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

2010. *The Special Schools Reform* transformed Special Schools into resource centres. These Centres, along with mainstream schools, seek to participate in inter-school collaboration, giving support according to students' needs as well as sharing expertise, knowledge and teaching strategies..

2011. *The National Curriculum Framework* was launched. It has three core principles, which seek to prepare all children to become lifelong learners who are confident, successful, creative, connected and engaged in the community and the world around them.

2014. The Ministry of Education and Employment launched a *One Tablet Per Child* project. Individual teachers volunteered to help introduce various models and makes of tablets, including androids and iPads. Apps emphasize literacy, numeracy and digital literacy, which are focal points within the *National Literacy Strategy* and the *National Curriculum Framework*. Outcomes of this study may shed light on the use of tablets for pupils with individual educational needs and provide a clearer picture of what is feasible in the Maltese context.

Recently, a study focused on the barriers Maltese school-aged children with complex communication needs face in accessing AAC systems. Using Beukelman and Mirenda's Participation Model to analyse and interpret the data, results from the study made included recommendations

for increasing the active participation of AAC users. The lead researcher interviewed service providers and families during a face-to-face focus group. Barriers identified included:

- A general lack of awareness of the benefits of AAC systems
- Inequality of opportunity and provision
- Negative attitudes
- Limited training and funding.

Recommendations from the study included:

- All stakeholders should become activists in changing public attitudes towards AAC through training opportunities to augment general awareness, equality of opportunity and opportunities for interaction.
- There should be greater collaboration among major stakeholders
- There should be a person-centred approach towards service delivery.

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CROATIA SEPTEMBER 2015
by Miroslav Vrankic

In September 2015, an "AAC tour" in Croatia included a series of events: a 2-day event in Zagreb (hosted in Center for Education Dubrava), a 1-day event in Rijeka (hosted in Center for Education Rijeka) and a 1-day event in Split (hosted in Center for Education Slava Raskaj - Split). The main speaker was Patricia Politano, Clinical Assistant Professor from University of Illinois at Chicago, Department of Disability and Human Development. Additional speakers at the event in Zagreb were David Hofer, CEO of LIFEtool from Austria and Kaveh Vefagh from Swedish company Tobii Dynavox.

Over 300 workshop attendees shared information and resources about assessment and implementation of AAC. Workshop attendees also had hands-on experience with assistive technology and built social support networks with other teachers, parents and therapists. The event was sponsored by the U.S. Department of State's Professional Fellows Program via WorldChicago and organized by Professor Miroslav Vrankic from the University of Rijeka, and Ruzica Magusic, a speech and language pathologist from the Center for Education Dubrava.

Announcing a Regional AT and AAC Conference September 2016 in Zagreb, Croatia
Preparation for a much larger conference is currently underway. It will take place on September 1st and 2nd 2016 in Zagreb and bring together professionals from South Eastern Europe, including Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro. The purpose of the 2016 conference is to foster the

exchange of knowledge and resources to build capacity and meet the assistive technology needs of people with disabilities in this region. Leaders in AAC and Assistive Technology from each country will be invited to present at the conference. Also manufacturers of assistive technology will exhibit in order to develop pathways for distribution within the region. *The website for the Regional AT and AAC Conference will be available soon.*

"INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: CURRENT ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN ARMENIA"

Report by Armine Avagyan, Dean of Special Education Faculty and Armine Snkhchyan assistant to the Dean

On October 1-2, 2015 in Yerevan, Armenia, the Armenian State Pedagogical University (ASPU) hosted an International Scientific Practical Conference on inclusive education.

The event focused on issues of quality education for children with special needs and their socialization challenges, and explored ways to improve the current situation through locally and internationally recorded best practices. Participants came from the USA, Scotland, Switzerland, Finland, Poland, Russia, Czech Republic, Belarus, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and included representatives from local Armenian and international institutions (e.g., university professors, heads of institutions providing inclusive education, members of multidisciplinary teams, teachers, heads and representatives of NGOs, service centers and clinics).

Participants provided valuable and positive feedback. For example,
- They appreciated the conference format, including the discussion hour, and the
- cultural program. They also said they liked the friendly atmosphere and the quality of the translation services. Finally, they appreciate having the Abstracts Book beforehand.

In addition to the conference, guest lecturers from Russia, Scotland, Switzerland and the USA delivered lectures at the Armenian State Pedagogical University (ASPU). These lectures were attended by specialists from Yerevan and Armenian regions.
- September 28-29. The Special Education Faculty of ASPU hosted Alexander Suvorov, Professor of the UNESCO Chair on the Cultural and Historical Psychology of Childhood at Moscow State University of Psychology and Education, Doctor of Psychology, Honorary Doctor of Susquehanna University in central Pennsylvania, USA. Dr. Suvorov is a blind and deaf psychology professor, who "sees" the world through the eyes of a creative man and "hears" everything through the ears of children. His presentation covered the experience of an orphanage for blind and deaf children in Zagorsk, as well as issues connected with rehabilitation, socialization and personal development of these children.

- September 29 - October 4. Cate Smith, Professor of Reading education and special education department, Appalachian State University, North Carolina, delivered a series of lectures on "Assistive Technologies" at the Special Education Faculty, ASPU. Students, professors, and specialists from inclusive institutions attended the lectures, took part in discussions, practical activities and professional consultations with excitement. Dr. Smith also reached an agreement to carry out joint research with ASPU faculty.

- October 5-9. Dorothy Fraser, Senior Representative to Eastern and Central Europe, Central Coast Children's Foundation Inc., delivered a series of lectures focusing on ''Introduction to Augmentative and Alternative Communication for Education and Social Inclusion''. The Scottish specialist held both theoretical and practical training with future therapists, as well as lecturers and guests from various institutions in Armenia. She singled out new forms of communication for Armenian students. Dorothy also reached an agreement for future collaboration with the Faculty of Special Education at ASPU.

Interactive Visual Schedules   The Pleasure of Stories workshop

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- October 5. ASPU hosted Swiss Professors, MD Maya Fehlmann and speech-language pathologist, special educator Christina Leumann. These specialists focused on problems people with special needs face in everday life, providing an analysis across age groups - from birth to old age. During a question and answer session, the Swiss professors also learned more about inclusive education in Armenia.

WHEN YOU'VE GOT TO GO'
By Jane Lynch and Caroline Knight

[Editor's Note: At Ash Field Academy in Leicester, England, staff uses music in many different ways to support communication development. They try to make the music activities both relevant and fun and in tune with the real interests of the secondary students, so it is perhaps not surprising that the students came up with a song to raise awareness about, and promote the need for, better disabled access to public toilet facilities. You might want to view the song they produced (When you've got to go) on the following YouTube link, before perusing this article: http://youtu.be/8eLBxoabxjA . We hesitate to suggest that these students may have started a movement (sic), but it may well turn out that this idea can be used in other areas as well.]

At Ash Field Academy we use music in many ways to support communication development. Our pupils respond well and are motivated by the fun activities. We adapt the music and songs to suit children with a range of ages and communication skills. Music helps us achieve many things:
- It raises awareness and the profile of AAC within the school
- It promotes the students' voice

- It builds the students' self esteem
- It develops physical and cognitive skills
- It harnesses creativity
- It provides practice when meeting individual access needs

Students have opportunities to practise and refine their skills while having fun. In addition to using their communication aids, they are using skills such as sharing joint attention, making eye contact, attending and listening, turn taking, responding in a timed manner, directing others, sharing their ideas and engaging in social communication. For example, we

- Use single message switches to tell the musicians to play faster or slower, louder or quieter
- Use single message switches to join in with a repeated line or chorus in a song
- Use single message switches to add sound effects such as animal noises in a song about a farm or machine noises in a song about transport
- Participate with words and ideas when composing new songs
- Sequence the lines of favourite pop songs as the musicians play the accompaniment
- Present highlights from a musical where students participate in both the music and the dialogue
- Direct dancers as the music is played – clap your hands, nod your head, turn around

Ash Field Academy is a day and weekly residential school with 135 students aged 4 – 19 who have a wide range of abilities. All have physical disabilities and some also have sensory, communication, learning, medical, emotional or behavioral issues. The school is proud of the 'excellent spirit' of its' students and their achievements.

At Ash Field Academy we believe that supporting the development of effective communication skills is a high priority so communication is at the heart of every aspect of school life. Supporting children's speech, language and communication also contribute to a wide range of outcomes in educational achievement, social competence, behaviour and mental health. Good communication skills support positive self-esteem and confidence.

Working as a communication team with members from different professional backgrounds has enabled us to offer many students in the school new and exciting ways to communicate. Through school celebrations and productions students have been able to take centre stage and share their achievements with others, raising the self-esteem of individuals and the profile of AAC within the school.

Last term four students were in the secondary level AAC group. They had previously worked on fun projects and performed at a local theatre and also at a local university. This topic they selected was to campaign for better toilet facilities in the community.

One of the students had previously contacted his local Member of Parliament (MP) *and* the Prime Minister regarding the lack of fully accessible facilities. He was duly invited down to the Houses of Parliament, where he met with his local MP to promote the need for better facilities. He used his iPad and his voice to deliver a presentation.

Working together with Ash Field staff and musicians Dan Britton and Kev Bayliss, the students decided it would be a good idea to write a song and maybe get some video footage to support their campaign for better disabled access toilet facilities.

The lyrics to the song are based on words suggested by the students using their speech output communication devices, iPads, sign language and voices. They were all very angry, which was understandable because they had to leave parties, or the pub or a football match early due to a lack of toilet facilities. The title of the song is 'When You've Got to Go.' ©.

The students were involved in every aspect of the song and video production. They each practised using a GoPro camera by initially filming around school. This practice enabled them to take an active part in filming the video.

As facilitating staff we had to persuade the students to take a "positive approach." We looked on the Changing Places website and found there were eight fully accessible Changing Places toilets within a 10 mile radius of the academy. The students chose to visit Bradgate Park, thinking a day out at the park whilst researching for their project would be a good idea.

One of the students emailed the Estate Office at Bradgate Park to ask permission for the group to (1) visit and assess their Changing Places toilet facility and (2) take some photographs and video footage to go with the song we had written. Her communication target was to communicate in the community.

The Bradgate Park staff were intrigued as to why we wanted to video and photograph their disabled access toilet facilities. When we explained further, they became very interested and asked if they could view the finished product amd put it on their website with a link to YouTube to promote their facilities for other disabled visitors.

At this point we became aware that the project could attract media attention. We informed parents and sought permission for their children to appear on YouTube and potentially on other social networking sites.

On the visit to Bradgate Park, students were impressed with the maintainance of their Changing Places toilet facility. It was spacious and complete. It had an electrically adjustable changing table and sink and a mobile hoist, which made it fully accessible to its disabled visitors.

The students were involved in getting video footage, directing, making decisions on actual location points and communicating with the general public. They confidently used their communication devices to interact with adults and children.

The video footage from the park was edited and mixed together with footage of the students using their communication devices during the recording of the song, which took place at the school.

Dan Britton recorded the chorus and harmonies at a local recording studio owned by Neil Segrott. Neil was able to come into school with all his equipment to record each student's respective part. Adaptations were made to enable as needed. For example, one student needed to be in a symmetrikit chair so a switch was positioned and velcroed to a sheet placed on the chair so she could access it comfortably with her head.

A reporter from BBC Radio Leicester came to school to interview the students. Their responses were aired during a phone-in debate on the radio. 'When you've got to go' was also played in full. This program generated lots of discussion amongst the general public who called in with their personal experiences. In short, the awareness the students had raised locally had exceeded all their expectations.

This group of inspirational students displayed great determination, motivation and a drive to succeed. They communicated with the local and wider community and, through YouTube, their message has been viewed and communicated worldwide.

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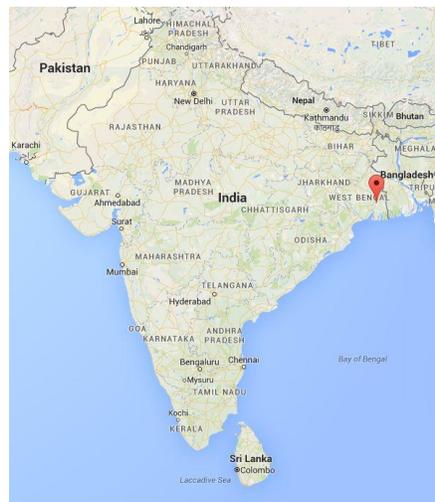
**PIONEERING INCLUSION FOR CHILDREN WITH CEREBRAL PALSY IN INDIA**
by Madhumita Dasgupta

[Editor's Note: Madhumita Dasgupta spent seven months as a teacher in residence at the Bridge School in Hillsborough, California as part of the school's efforts to spread its innovative work to areas of the world where augmentative communication is emerging as a significant intervention. Since her return to India, Madhumita

has provided new and important leadership in promoting inclusion for children with cerebral palsy and significant communication issues. This article reports on some of her most salient efforts and is edited and abridged with permission from an original publication in Confluence (Jan., 2015), a publication of India's Department of School Education and Literacy]

Abhirup Sarkar is an imaginative and 'tech- savvy' ten-year-old with very good social skills. He is fluent in his native tongue (Bengali), and, although his speech is somewhat unclear and it sometimes takes him a while to respond to questions, he understands and expresses himself meaningfully. As it is too difficult for him to hold a pencil, his writing is illegible, but, clearly, his quick mind requires a better way for him to use language.
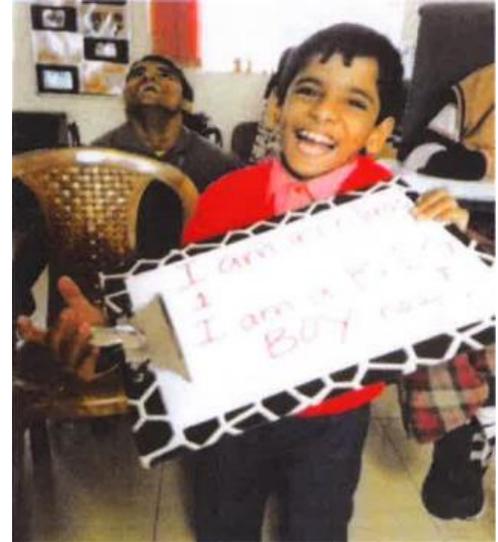
When I first met him, he had just been admitted to the public school Patha Bhavan. His parents wanted him to be in a class with his peers, so we conducted a series of assessments to help us understand his needs in a range of activities, and to determine: (1) the nature of his interactions, (2) current instructional and physical arrangements, (3) support available to him and the staff, (4) materials and equipment he needed across various technological, physical, and instructional environments. Our main concerns were how to:

- Mould the attitudes and expectations of staff, family and peers
- Develop and suggest adaptations
- Select a range of dynamic strategies and choose specific tasks that would promote his communication and active involvement in different environments

In order to do this, his teachers, parents and peers needed to accept and understand his use of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) and Assistive Technology (AT) tools. Accordingly, Abhirup 's Inclusion Team (a general education teacher, assistant teacher, and special educator working with the child one-on-one) met to develop an appropriate plan so that he could participate in the general education setting. We made a QWERTY alphabet board and a Bengal spell board as augmentative tools, and we showed him and his teacher how to use it to generate speech. We also showed him how to use a single switch for functional writing on the computer. In addition, through modeling, we demonstrated how to encourage him to use a spell board to support his communication efforts.

The teacher's original concern was that, with Abhirup in the classroom, she worried that her forty other students might not be able to finish their work on time. However, she was open to using the communication supports we showed her, and over time, she developed a sense of pride in Abhirup's ability to actively participate in class.

Next, we wanted to teach Abhirup to write independently. The staff and principal learned that he could do all his homework and classwork at par with his peers as long as it was with the use of a personal laptop. Abhirup learned the Bengali keyboard and then learned to type. With help and training from his teacher and mother,

Abhirup now copies from the blackboard and can do all written activities in English and Bengali, as well as complete his mathematics using MS Word and Bengali Word software. He does his work independently on his personal laptop and often completes it before his peers. He participates in oral discussions with a theme-based answer page and sentence strips. He often shares personal fun messages with the class, using a chat book, and has become the toast of the school.

The story of Abhirup's inclusion in a regular classroom with his peers illustrates how assistive technology and augmentative communication strategies can make inclusion possible, even for students with significant communication disorders. By weaving AAC and AT into the daily routines of children with special needs, we can enable more participatory action in school life and learning. Devices can help learners with physical difficulties to use a computer and to access software that can help them learn *and* communicate. For some children, technology may be the only way to ensure they can make their needs known. For students with cerebral palsy, technology-based solutions are not a luxury, but a necessity, in realizing their full potential in school and in their community.

When making and implementing goals for each student we have learned that we need clear benchmarks to signify the success of the Inclusion Team. Teams need to know when to fade supports and how to encourage independence. Anything is possible: children with cerebral palsy could lead their school choir with a touch-pad voice output device to set a drumbeat; children who use a walker might have picture clues to help them take a different path to reach a colorful ball that is hidden; teachers might support a child to write a short story by providing access to appropriate words and phrases, or to the alphabet on a communication board. Children can also learn to conduct interviews independently, working with a skilled communication partner. Together the support person and child can develop questions in advance and then program these into a speech generating computer.

AAC tools and AT devices often work best together in helping students with special needs. A wide range of child-centric as well as teacher-directed classroom strategies will help facilitate the smooth transition of children with neurological impairments like cerebral palsy to mainstream classrooms, using both non-electronic and electronic communication supports. Planning for participation requires the provision of sufficient and consistent support that empowers children to be as independent as possible, and to develop self-determination from the very beginning. The goal is to communicate using language without conversational breakdowns and with minimal dependency on others. For many, such goals are ambitious and difficult to achieve, but, with intensive training and tools/devices, these goals are achievable. Opportunities for participation need to be created with intention, consistency, and accountability. Respect (*e.g.,* use "person first" language, as in a "person with a disability," not "a disabled person") is very important, as is placing a strong emphasis on choice making from an early age.

The experience of another student four years younger than Abhirup also demonstrates the value of AT in promoting full inclusion. Mridul Kedia is a bright, happy and very energetic six-year-old boy who interacts best

when given freedom to express himself using multi-modal communication (facial expressions, body language, eye gaze and fist pointing). He has cerebral palsy and a speech impairment. He needs support from his caregiver to walk and he sits in a straight back chair with a cutout tray, foot strap and lap strap. At home and in school, Mridul has been exposed to a wide range of regular indoor and outdoor activities, including social gatherings and playing cricket with his friends. Through these incidental learning opportunities, he has developed a good bilingual vocabulary.

Recently Mridul joined Akshar in the inclusive public school. Mridul has learned to use a Voice Output Device (VOD) to talk. Examples of VODs include the Step-By-Step (Ablenet) or the GupShup Talking Album. These are electronic AAC systems that use pre-recorded or synthetic speech and can supplement or replace a child's impaired speech.

- Kathamala is a VOD, with 16 grids and up to 8 minutes of pre-recorded sound.
- GupShup Book is a smart and handy, battery-operated 10-page pre-recorded talking album that can store pictures and text cards.

The resource teacher and Mridul co-constructed fun messages in his talker. At the annual exhibition of the Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy (IICP), Mridul typed messages with his elbow to initiate and maintain conversation. The visitors' positive response had him wanting to talk more. Mridul's rote and visual learning skills also help him answer questions independently at school. We made a quick message page for him so that he can "talk" using both his word board and his QWERTY alphabet board.

In school, the classroom teacher and special educator held an abilities awareness activity and asked each child to introduce him/herself. Mridul used his VOD. The teachers and the inclusion facilitator also developed classroom activities, such as storytelling, which required Mridul to speak. The teacher has also encouraged a peer buddy to support Mridul. Staff has learned how to fade caregiver supports in class and how to build a circle of peer- and teacher-buddies to facilitate Mridul's communication during academic activities.

Mridul's teachers and his mother have developed several picture-text based displays for his communication book. He now has many pages, which he uses to talk about his life and feelings, both at home and with strangers. He has even learned to recite poems in Hindi and English, using his communication board, and to talk to his friends about playtime using a message card.

The general education teacher has learned to incorporate activities where all the children need to answer only a "YES" or "NO" by pointing to look-and-say cards. Peer partnership and social rewards are underscored. Current goals for Mridul, his mother and teachers are to help him use an English language communication board with correct syntax to answer questions in sentences. He will soon receive training so he can learn to

type on his special keyboard, and then he will be able to participate in writing activities in class along with his peers.

Abhirup and Mridul's learning situation could not occur without substantial effort on the part of many people. Adults need to recognize, accept, and promote the use of communication supports. Speech and language pathologists, educators and other professionals need to work together with persons with complex communication needs and their parents. Only then can the rest of the critical steps discussed in this article be realized. Each child's plan has to be individualized to meet their unique needs and work within their unique beliefs and lifestyles. This requires intensive training on the part of children with complex communication needs, teachers, peers and parents.

In summary, technology can help mitigate barriers to the inclusion and participation of children (as well as adults) in mainstream society. Our goal is to ensure that children with cerebral palsy and complex communication needs can overcome their limitations, and access a broader curriculum and school experience alongside their peers.

OIC: BRINGING SPEECH THERAPY TO CAMBODIA
By Christina Lukeman

[**Editor's Note**: *Chirstina Lukeman is currently on staff at the Central Coast Children's Foundation. In the autumn of 2014 she travelled to Siemreap Province in Cambodia and spent 9 months organizing and coordinating over 35 volunteers who were helping to provide free education to low-income rural children who otherwise would not have access to any other schooling.*]

In Cambodia, an estimated 600,000 people have a communication or swallowing disorder. Yet, despite this alarming statistic, health services for those in need are nearly nonexistent. The vast majority of children with speech disabilities do not go to school because teachers and schools lack resources and training to teach them. Comparing the cost of treatment with the productivity that these children could bring to the workforce later in life, the country may lose approximately 3 per cent of their gross national product yearly because they do not provide any speech therapy. This accounts for $400 million in lost income every year in Cambodia, a country that receives half a billion dollars in aid money every year, and has more than 3,500 NGOs working within its borders. How is it that 600,000 people have been left behind?

OIC: The Cambodia Project has come to change that. OIC is a Global Development Group that works to bring speech therapy to Khmer people with communication and swallowing disabilities. "OIC refers to 'Oh! I see'— a moment of clarity," says Managing Director Weh Yeoh. The organization aims to address the gaps in health services and envisions a Cambodia where people with disabilities can have full, happy lives and participate in society to their fullest extent.

OIC includes a small team of dedicated professionals (mostly Australian volunteers). It is based in the capital, Phnom Penh, where the team works toward two primary goals: (1) to train teachers in speech therapy-based inclusive education across six provinces in Cambodia, (2) to graduate the first generation of Cambodian speech therapists from a Cambodian University.

Six months ago, OIC launched Cambodia's biggest campaign for speech therapy. They found 20 unseen, unheard stories from children with disabilities across the country and piloted how the efficacy of speech therapy would improve their lives. They presented their project to the United Nations and the Cambodian government for further support and funding, with great success. Two highlighted examples are of young students Ling and Mai.

The latest: on November 10, a group of OIC team members met with Cambodian community leaders in Melbourne, Australia. At a dinner organized by Richard Lim of Lim's Pharmacy, Lim donated $5,000 to OIC to support its program to provide children with communication disabilities access to schools. Many community members are rallying behind OIC through in-kind support, connections and donations throughout Asia and Australia. You can read more about their journey HERE.

A PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH TO SYSTEMATIC USE OF SYMBOLS TO AUGMENT COMMUNICATIVE NEEDS OF THE VERBALLY IMPAIRED IN VIETNAM

By Peng-Sim Eng

In an environment where effective facilitation for special educational needs is at an emergent stage, use of symbols for augmenting communication can be a new concept for both teaching staff and the students they assist. Kianh Foundation, a charity funded non-government organization, operates an educational facility for children, ages three to eighteen, with a diversity of impairments including autism, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, microcephalus, sensory impairments, developmental delay and other undiagnosed impairments.

Kianh Centre services the local community from the Dien Ban Day Centre (DBC) located about six kilometers out from Hoi An in Central Vietnam.

Appointed as a Teacher Trainer for Special Education by Australian Volunteers for International Development, I started my first two-year assignment in March 2012 at the then newly built DBC.

Two verbally impaired students using the communication book to share ideas.

Students using different parts of speech to make simple, key symbol/word statements

By May 2012, it was apparent that the level of expressive communication from students with severe verbal impairments was limited to body gestures, a few approximate hand signs (Makaton) for key words like *toilet*, non-comprehensive verbalization, and negation/confirmation of comments made by communication partners. At that point in time there was no available support from qualified speech pathologists.

My research readings and use of multi-level communication books in Australia, made me the only one with some experience in symbol based AAC systems. In an environment where effective facilitation for special educational needs was at the emergent stage, use of symbols for augmenting communication was a new concept for both teaching staff and the students they assist.

It was apparent to me as the teacher trainer that if an AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication) system was to be an effective functional tool for student communication, the staff should first accept it, and it should be easy to understand and use. As I was the only one with some experience in symbol- based AAC systems, pedagogical aspects of teaching and learning had to be given due attention when developing a system for use in communicating intent.

Teachers and classroom staff worked together to make up important themes and to list out verbs, adjectives, prepositions, feeling and nouns within each theme identified. Selected words were compiled into categories such as animals, plants, nature, weather, people, body parts, food, drinks, clothing, places, household items, transport and special occasions.

Identifying symbols to assemble a symbol-based library for Vietnamese words

The next phase involved identifying culturally appropriate symbols for the selected vocabulary. Due to culture and language (English / Vietnamese) differences, symbols were not always available or appropriate from common AAC sources. Google Images, while not ideal, offered a quick solution. Teachers were given options for some words but were

Facilitating staff teaching and assessing students for concept awareness

also free to present symbols they thought were more acceptable. At times, their preference for iconic photos and images posed a problem. Staff and students needed to learn to generalize symbol uses for greater communicative needs. For example, there were requests for symbols for 'eating rice', 'eating noodles', 'eating fish', 'eating bread', *etc*. rather than linking two symbols, the verb '*eat*' to each individual symbol for the nouns '*rice*', '*noodle*', '*fish*', '*bread*, etc.* making each individual symbol available to use in other contexts and to make other comments.

Making meaning from symbols or concept development

Successful use of symbols for communication was dependent on the users being able to recognize and identify *symbols* that represented the spoken *words* they intended to express. Concept development started in September 2012 to teach symbols for words that teachers were already using in structured sessions.

Facilitating staff teaching and assessing students for concept awareness

The staff provided opportunities for students to use verbs and/or adjectives in combination with each preferred noun. This helped students minimize the tendency to use symbols/words only for object labeling, which often results in ineffective communication.

Sept. 2012
Dec. 2012
Feb. 2013
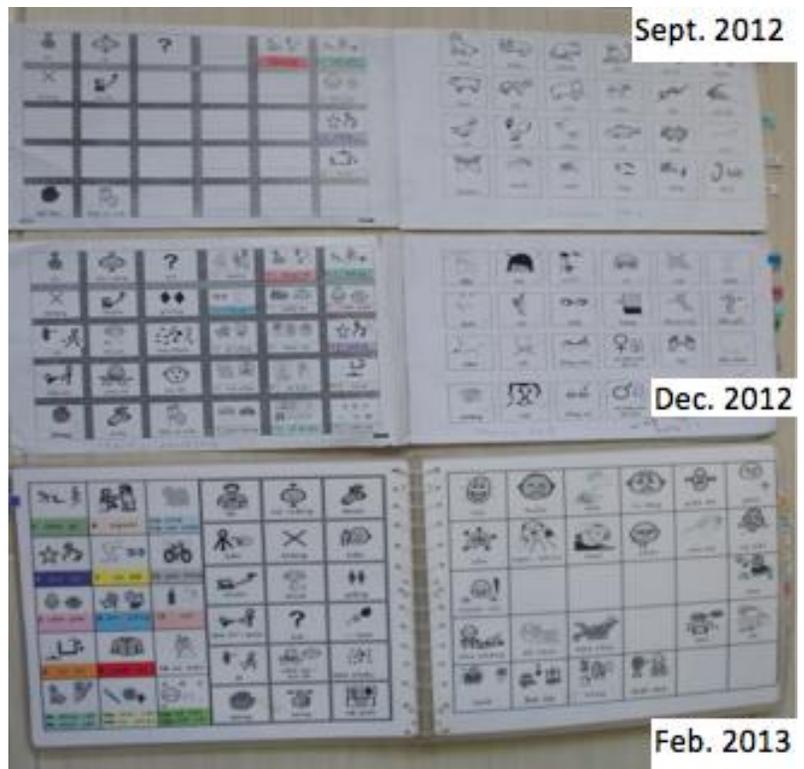
A culturally appropriate system

Based on feedback from teachers, the process of identifying symbols and organizing the layout of symbols in the book underwent many reviews and changes until the decision to compile all vocabulary into a comprehensive book was made. The completed version of the communication book would be of immediate use to some of the older students with cerebral palsy. More elementary versions are being developed over time to meet the needs of other younger and less cognitively able students.

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Identifying the core vocabulary and navigating through the communication book

As systematic augmentation with symbols was new to everyone, the process of navigating through the proposed system needed to be easy. Staff learned this process first, and then taught it to the students.

They learned a simple two-step sequence to navigate through the book and access key words of choice in making short meaningful statements. Words from the Core vocabulary identified by teachers (left side of *index* page) were the first point of contact, followed by access to fringe vocabulary from one of the Categories (right side of *index* page). This two-step sequence enabled formation of meaningful three to five word statements combining Ve*rbs*, *Adjectives*, *Prepositions* and *Feelings* with object words from the other thematic categories.

The book and students' skills were tested with the arrival of final year speech therapy students from University of Newcastle in May 2013. In September 2013, one of Kianh's non-verbal students independently used her book to have a full girls' conversation, shopping included, with a visiting speech pathologist. The conversation ended with the student asking the visitor where she came from. USA was the answer.

Moving On

The exercise described above is demonstrative of how teachers and teaching staff can meet basic communication needs of the children and youth who are verbally impaired even if speech pathology services are not available. The Kianh communication book established a culturally appropriate, systematic approach to using symbols for augmenting communication in Kianh Centre. In 2015, a volunteer speech pathologist from Australia took the communication book and augmentative communication at Kianh to a completely new level of proficiency, adding syntax and grammar for language development, as well as developing a Vietnamese voice output communication system.

VISUAL SCHEDULES IN VIETNAM
By Joanna Nelson
Final year speech pathology student
University of Newcastle, Australia

Speech Pathology in Vietnam
Speech pathology as a profession is not yet officially recognised in Vietnam, and in a population of over 90 million a great need for speech pathology services exists.

Language therapy with a student

Speech pathologists worldwide, including from the University of Newcastle, Australia are advocating for the profession in the country, as its recognition will have significant importance in expanding speech pathology training programs and services vital for the future of Vietnam.

Since 2008 the Trinh Foundation, Australia has been involved in establishing and promoting speech pathology services in Vietnam. The Trinh Foundation in collaboration with the University of Pham Ngoc Thach (PNTU), Australian Volunteer International (AVI) and the University of Newcastle has developed Vietnam's first speech pathology course.
The two-year postgraduate program has produced 32 speech pathologists who work as pioneers for speech pathology in a severely under represented profession.

Trinh Foundation, continues to support the development of speech therapy in Vietnam . During 2015 the Trinh Foundation has provided ongoing support in the professional development of the graduates through a Continuing Professional Development program; assisted to establish a speech therapy clinic in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) in collaboration with PNTU and continued to support speech therapy development in Central and North Vietnam. Support has also been provided in developing an undergraduate curriculum in speech therapy for establishment at PNTU in 2016.

The Kianh Foundation

In 2001 the Kianh Foundation was established to provide much needed services for children with disability in Central Vietnam.

High poverty levels, coupled with toxin spraying and bombing during the American-Vietnam War, left the Dien Ban district of Vietnam with a severely high rate of disability and few services available for treatment.

The Foundation began working with a local orphanage in Hoi An, and by 2012 had built a day centre specifically for teaching and supporting children with disability from the Dien Ban district. At the Kianh Foundation, health and educational services are provided for these children in a positive learning environment. The students receive otherwise inaccessible services from a range of professionals including teachers, physiotherapists, social workers, and speech pathologists. Learning in the classroom is combined with physical movement, dance, music, key word sign, and teaching of life skills.

Since 2013, the University of Newcastle has established a partnership with the Kianh Foundation Day Centre which has included clinical training opportunities for final year speech pathology students. Students and supervising speech pathologists work at the school with teachers and interpreters: completing communication and swallowing assessments; providing therapy for a range of speech, language, and swallowing difficulties; and running workshops to provide strategies for the staff to use with students.

Student Experience at Kianh

In April 2015, a group of six speech pathology students and a senior supervising speech pathologist from the University of Newcastle visited the school.

University of Newcastle Students arriving at Kianh Foundation Day Centre

Over the two weeks we completed mealtime observations for children with cerebral palsy, provided speech and language therapy, conducted early intervention and augmentative and alternative communication groups, and ran interactive presentations on language stimulation techniques and use of visual systems in the classroom. We worked with passionate staff, and students with varying disabilities who, in light of all they face, are positive every day.

Working internationally in a developing country was an extraordinary experience. At first glance you notice the differences: the limited resources and language barriers. After just two weeks you see what is shared: commitment to education and the children's development. At Kianh, learning in the classroom is combined with physical movement, dance, music, key word sign, and teaching of life skills.

Compared to an average Australian classroom one may see it as bare, but any lack of resources is offset with innovation

As a student, it is exciting to see where the implementation of visual systems started and where it is headed.

Use of Visual Systems at Kianh

Visual schedules may be used to support communication through development of expressive and receptive language skills, enhancement of language learning, and provision of visual representation of daily schedules for increased understanding of routines (Shane *et al.*, 2015). In October 2014 a group of speech pathology students introduced visual schedules to supplement and standardise visual systems already in use at Kianh.

A teacher learning to use new visual schedules

These schedules used medium-sized boards and removable 2D images to offer routines and language models for the children in the classroom. Visual schedules at Kianh now include larger classroom boards and smaller activity boards to break down daily and individual activities. Small images representing objects and activities are attached to the boards with Velcro, allowing them to be moved as necessary. The children may be asked to place these images on the board when planning the daily schedule, and to complement this image with a verbal or signed production of the word. Reinforcement of the link between the word and the visual aims to enhance communication, and for non-verbal children the exchange of images can be used in requesting and communicating with others (Tissot & Evans, 2003).

Using a visual schedule in the 'Busy Bees' classroom

Reporting every day use of the schedules in April 2015 the teachers all stated that they found the visual schedules had been successful in developing a routine, getting attention and establishing interest in the children. One teacher from the 'Cute Cats' classroom commented that some children were becoming more independent with the use of the visuals, which was "making them happy."

When asked for feedback on where the schedules may need improvement two of the three teachers indicated that the images, whether photographs or symbols, were not consistent across the classrooms of the school. Others commented that there were often not enough symbols or relevant images to describe classroom activities.

Changes are now being undertaken at the school with the aim to standardise images across all classrooms. This process also includes an expansion of the repertoire of images to include more relevant classroom items and activities; colour coordination of images to distinguish between tasks; and lamination of images for longevity.

Future Directions

The continuing success of visual schedules in the classrooms of Kianh will significantly depend on their acceptance by the teachers and students. The teachers must be trained and supported in their use of the schedules, so that they in turn may teach the children to use them. It is also known that the benefits of visual systems increase with use, and

Images for visual schedules

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therefore it is essential that they are included as often as possible in daily activities for the best learning outcomes to occur.

It is important to note that this program comes from just one school in Vietnam.

Author Acknowledgments
Thank you to the Kianh Foundation for permission to write this article and to use photos taken during our time there. Thank you also to Dr Sally Hewat and Ms Thizbe Wenger for their dedicated teaching and guidance during and beyond our placement in Vietnam. The experience with all the staff and students at the centre remains the most enjoyable and enlightening of my degree.

For further information on speech pathology and volunteer work in Vietnam you can visit:

Kianh Foundation: http://www.kianh.org.uk/
Trinh Foundation*: http://trinhfoundation.org/
or contact
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The University of Newcastle, Australia
61 (2) 49215159
Sally.Hewat@newcastle.edu.au

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[Editor's note: *To view a comparable effort to introduce visual symbols to special education teachers in Ghana, go to: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jxaxws_x5gQ, which describes the 2013 professional retreat conducted by speech therapy faculty and students from Teachers College at Columbia University*]

VIDEOS

OVERCOMING COMMUNICATION AND VISION BARRIERS IN MEXICO

CATIC (Centro de Apoyo Tecnológico para la Comunicación y el Aprendizaje) is producing an amazing training video/DVD depicting the ways in which children with severe communication and visual impairments can benefit from augmentative communication interventions. This Spanish/English language video (with subtitles) highlights the ways in which a young child from Mexico City confronts the many communication and vision barriers he and his family face.

Director of CATIC Gaby Berlanga, alongside Dr. Sarah Blackstone, a leading international expert in the field of augmentative communication, videographer Eric Palmer, and Diego's family all closely collaborated on this educational production. The purpose of the training video is to help family members, teachers, friends, therapists, and community workers understand the challenges children like Diego face and to encourage people in the lives of children with disabilities to communicate directly with them.

Watching the video will help individuals who live and work with children who have communication impairments learn about:

1. The kinds of communication tools and supports that can be successfully used to support children with communication, motor, and visual impairments,
2. Ways to help children like Diego succeed in developing language, vision, and communication skills.
3. Ways for other therapists and family members to work with these children in ways that promote their participation in everyday life, today and in the future.

To access this video, email an inquiry to: gabriela@caticmexico.org

OF NOTE

BUILDING FOR GENERATIONS

[Building for Generations](#) supports education projects worldwide with a focus on persons with special needs. They have recently shared many exciting updates about their work in Tanzania and Peru. The following updates are taken from their July Newsletter, and we are happy to share them. We are proud supporters of Building for Generations and encourage you to support their work as well. You can keep up with Building for Generations and subscribe to their newsletter through their [website](#).

Tanzania Update: Our first project "Naurei Special Needs Unit"

Our lunch program has continued in 2015. We began this program a year after building the project in response to a child with severe seizures in our unit. A doctor examining him reported that his seizures were aggravated by malnutrition. When we heard this, we suspected other children were also malnourished. For about 21 cents per child per meal we are now able to provide a nice lunch for 56 students.

Lunch Program

"Centro Joaquin" Chincha Baja, Peru

Children enjoying the new classroom

We were delighted to see the new room addition to our Center in Peru. This is a photo of the first workshop held there, and we hope for many more. We are sending three of the local people, the psychologist, speech therapist, and a parent, to be trained in Positive Discipline in Lima. The training certifies them as trainers so they can bring the training back to ALL families in Chincha, including those who have children with disabilities. We look forward to updates and photos on the success of their endeavors.

IPADS FOR COMMUNICATION, ACCESS, LITERACY AND LEARNING (ICALL)

How can we use the electronic devices that have infiltrated our lives to help those with communication and learning barriers? iPads have become extremely popular in today's world. Music, news, games, videos and more are all available on a small touchscreen device. These electronics can also be highly effective learning and communication tools if combined with the right Apps, or downloadable programs.

iPads for Communication, Access, Literacy and Learning (iCALL), is a comprehensive guide on how to use an iPad and how to transform this device into a teaching and learning tool for children and adults with communication and learning barriers. Developed by Call Scotland University of Edinburgh.

The 183 page guidebook starts with an introduction to the iPad, its pros and cons, where to purchase one and its basic functions. It discusses apps that support teaching and learning, accessibility options, iPad accessories and resources, using the iPad in assessments and exams, and managing and implementing iPads to support people with disabilities. In addition to a glossary, there are appendices that address curriculum management between iPads and Windows and tips on iPad management using iTunes. The PDF version of this comprehensive guide is available HERE.

THE UPDATED AAC APP WHEEL

Follow this link to access the newly updated AAC App Wheel. CALL Scotland released their resource "iPad Apps for Complex Communication Support Needs" last year and it has served thousands to date. This year they have updated the resource with new apps and accounted for any changes in previously suggested apps. Apps fall into the following four categories: Organisational Display, Symbol Set, Visual Support Features, and Language Organisation. More information about how to read the app wheel is provided at this link.
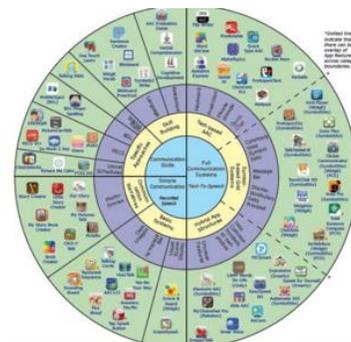
45 POWERFUL MOBILE APPS FOR THOSE WITH DISABILITIES

Click HERE for "the 45 most tried, tested and successful mobile applications" from users around the world. This online compilation includes both Apple and Android apps, and divides them into user-friendly categories for specific needs. Apps are organized for those who are blind/visually impaired, are deaf/hearing impaired, use a wheelchair/mobility scooter, have dyslexia, have autism, and have Alzheimer's or dementia. There are links to how to download each app and screenshots of how the app will look on your device.

TOP 20 APPS FOR STUDENTS WITH AUTISM

Communicare, LLC recently published their list of the top 20 apps for students with autism. Read HERE about iOS apps such as Symbol Support, DoodleWorks and Choice Works that can be accessed on the Apple App Store. The Communicare grid provides a description of the app, information about the app developer, the price and additional notes for your reference.

ASSISTIVEWARE

Amanda Hartmann, a Speech Language Pathologist from AssistiveWare, has described how to turn an App into a back-up paper book resource that is laminated for use in messy kitchen situations. Click here for the step-by-step instructions. Follow the links on the right hand side to access other blog posts like Amanda's, and learn more about cutting-edge assistive technology products and service solutions from AssistiveWare through tabs at the top of the page.

ACE LOW TECH COMMUNICATION OVERVIEW

In 2013, Karen Bailey and Katharine Buckley of the ACE Centre published an overview of low-tech communication resources. From Alphabet Charts to Creative Direct Access Materials, this comprehensive overview is a perfect tool to start learning about the available resources in the field. It provides advice on how to use tools and includes videos for reference. You can access the online guide by following this link.

JANE FARRALL CONSULTING

With over 20 years of experience working with people with disabilities and assistive technology, Jane Farrall has some great advice on AAC methods and how to teach literacy skills. Her consulting website includes posts with tips on effective AAC use, links with information about balanced literacy, lists of specific AAC apps, and lists of other helpful apps that mostly promote literacy. In addition to these online resources, there is also information about Jane's residential camp for children in Australia who use speech-generating devices can receive therapy and practice new communication skills. Click HERE to start exploring.

BEYOND MEASURE

Identifying and supporting children that have speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) as early as possible is critical to their learning and development. The Communication Trust has created a guide to evaluating and determining whether students in schools have SLCN. They provide two complete case studies on the effectiveness of their guide. The full guide is available HERE.

Through links on the left hand side of the page, you can access many other useful resources, such as tools for measuring progress in different age groups of learners with a video on how to use them (Progression Tools), and a tool for measuring the oral language environment of the classroom (Communication Supporting Classroom Observation Tool).

MAKING RESOURCES ACCESSIBLE FOR THOSE WITH DISABILITIES

Content and materials for learners should be as diverse and varied as the students themselves. At this link, you can learn key tips for inclusive teaching that are aimed at teaching all students as well as those with disabilities. The blog includes videos, links with specific examples, and further information on how to incorporate these teaching skills. Author, Lisa Featherstone, is a promoter of the use of technology to support an inclusive culture.

AUTISM IN SRI LANKA

After finishing her doctoral degree in communication sciences, Nimisha Muttiah returned to her home community in Sri Lanka with the mission of training special education teachers to use communication interventions and strategies with their students. Previously, many teachers had received little to no training with these strategies and were not equipped to provide these students with alternative communication methods. To read her article entitled, Providing instructional support for AAC service delivery in low- and middle-income (LAMI) countries: Muttiah, McNaughton, & Drager (2015), click here.

The trainings proved very effective and students have shown considerable improvement in communicating. In addition to these trainings, Muttiah travels to different areas in Sri Lanka to raise awareness about disabilities and specifically about communication disorders. She writes articles in local newspapers and encourages others to seek speech language pathology as a career in order to help other community members who struggle to communicate. She knows more work can be done and wants to continue to learn and bring new practices back to her community. When she is not on location in Sri Lanka, Muttiah works at the Franciscan Hospital for Children in Boston focusing on children with severe disabilities and complex communication needs. Follow this link to read more about Muttiah's impact.

In 2016, Nimisha plans to return to Sri Lanka full-time, initiate new programs that support providing children with more augmentative communication services, and help local professionals develop more skills in the area of augmentative communication.

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF CEREBRAL PALSY

Formerly known as the Spastic Society of Eastern India, the Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy (IICP) was established in 1947 and promotes the rights and equal treatment of all people living with cerebral palsy. Their mission is to improve the lives of these individuals through changes in policy and service provisions so they have the skills and opportunities to exercise their constitutional rights and participate in society. To learn more about this institute and their initiatives, click here. The website also provides short videos about the IICP.

CEREBRAL PALSY AFRICA

Special chairs or standing frames can help children with cerebral palsy use their hands and put weight on their legs. Paper Furniture Social Enterprise, a division of Cerebral Palsy Africa (CPA), has a unique program to teach people to make chairs and frames from wastepaper and cardboard that are not only sturdy, but also affordable and sustainable. In addition, CPA runs training programs in various African countries to give families, teachers and therapists the skills they need to help children with cerebral palsy function in their everyday lives. To learn more about their programs click here.

BARACKA'S SUCCESS AT DYMPHNA SPECIAL SCHOOL

When 12-year-old Baracka first arrived at Dymphna Special School in 2005, he was unable to walk or talk properly due to a learning disability. After working with volunteers at the School who provided physiotherapy and speech and language therapy, Baracka has learned to sing, play football with his friends, and help his parents tend to their cattle.

Baracka's success is just one part of the story of Dymphna Special School, which is a learning center in Arusha, Tanzania for children and young adults with disabilities and special education needs. The school was founded in 2002 by Mary Kaswende, a professional teacher and advocate for equality and access to education for persons with disabilities. It currently serves 35 students between the ages of 3 and 22.

The Dymphna School focuses on raising public awareness and community acceptance, helping children and families to determine specific needs, and sharing resources that will allow those with special needs to function more independently. Click here to learn more. The link "Why We Need Your Support" on the left hand side has other students' stories like Baracka's.

SALLY FROM THE JAFFREY ACADEMY

Swaleha Mohamedali Chandoo (Sally) is a key promoter of special education in Tanzania. She won the International Teacher of the Year Award from the Division of International Special Education (DISES) in 2013. She has an Associate's and Bachelor's of Art Degree in Special Education, and a Master's in Education Counseling. She works at the Jaffrey Academy in Arusha, Tanzania where she attended as a child when it was still known as Alibhai Panju Primary School. Since she started working there, Sally has founded and become principal of the school's special needs unit known as SEN, which includes a resource center for inclusive and exclusive education.

Her focus is assessing children's special needs and their root causes. She then provides the child counseling and remedial treatment while at school. Sally also uses parent-child interviews to promote parent involvement and teach parents how to best meet a child's needs at home. She has written a proposal to build a 4-story building with nine rooms on the Jaffrey campus, and is now looking for funding opportunities to expand these programs.

Her success goes beyond the Jaffery Academy. She has expanded special education across Tanzania through workshops for teacher training programs focused on sensitivity and awareness of special needs, introducing oral exams for dyslexic students taking National Exams, and starting Job Employment for Persons with Disabilities. She is member of the Special Olympics Tanzania, and was named National Chair of Tanzania by the International Association of Special Education (IASE). She has worked as a columnist since 1985, and continues this work for a local newspaper that runs a weekly column on learning disabilities. Click here to learn more about her success at the Jaffery Academy.

ANGEL'S CENTER FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Ugandan Rosemary Nambooze was completing a Master's program at the University of Antwerp in Belgium when she gave birth to her son, Abryl. Her son was born with Down Syndrome and a serious heart dysfunction. Fortunately for Rosemary, she was able to remain in Antwerp even after finishing her Master's program to get the help she needed for Abryl. It was her hope to one day return to Uganda and raise her son with friends and family, but Rosemary realized that the support she received for her son in Antwerp would not be available in Uganda. After Abryl went through a successful heart operation in Ghent, Rosemary planned their trip home. Rosemary also helped set up a support center for disabled children and their parents in Uganda, known as Angel's Center for Children with Special Needs. The mission of this organization is to work closely with and counsel parents of disabled children in Uganda to help them accept and appreciate their children. Parents are provided with resources and connections to local services for disabled children, and given counseling and guidance on how to help their child day-to-day. They are also trained on methods to assist their child and other parents in stimulating mental and physical development. The Angel Center's vision is that parents' acceptance and involvement will spread acceptance and support into the community as well.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

NEWS FROM SERBIA: BELGRADE SCHOOL OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATION
By Mirjana Đorđević

The *Belgrade School of Special Education and Rehabilitation* is a scientific, scholarly, peer-reviewed journal of national importance, open to authors from all areas of special education and related scientific disciplines. The journal aims to publish original scientific and professional articles.

The following types of articles are considered for publication: 1) empirical studies, 2) literature reviews, 3) brief and preliminary reports, and 4) commentary, critiques and polemics in science. Articles classified as scientific have to receive at least two positive reviews. In addition to scientific, the journal also publishes other types of articles: 1) professional articles, 2) news and events, and 3) book reviews. Professional articles should have one positive review. All articles are published in Serbian or English.

Anyone interested in writing an article for the journal please go to http://www.belgradeschool.com for information on author guidelines and application forms.

RESOURCES

Call Scotland
http://www.callscotland.org.uk/blog/refugee-communication-board-using-symbols/

Tobii Dynavox Refugee Communication Boards
http://www.tobiidynavox.com/refugee-communication-boards/

CDAC
Communication Disabilities Access Canada: Accessibility includes Communication
http://www.cdacanada.com/

CAN
Communication Access Network, Australia
http://www.scopevic.org.au/service/communication-access-network-can/
http://www.scopevic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/A4-Communication-Access-for-All-Booklet-2015-web.pdf

Farewell message - as 2015 comes to an end

A big Thank You to everyone who has provided news this year. We hope to continue having updates from regular contributors and aim to expand our network further to include information from people involved with projects in more countries.

Wishing you all a safe and successful 2016

Dot

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ISAAC Conference 2016 will be held at the Westin Harbour Castle hotel in Toronto, Canada, from August 6 – 13, 2016.
For information and to register for the conference, click here.

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