

Shenzhen Report

By James Aiwa

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World Blind Union Asia Pacific Region Mid-term Assembly was held from 21 – 23 March 2007 in Shenzhen City, the Peoples Republic of China.

I was given the opportunity to represent ICEVI Pacific at this conference. I would like to thank the following persons for their support. Without their support this trip would not be possible. They are:

Ms. Frances Gentle – ICEVI Pacific Chair
Dr. M. Mani – ICEVI Secretary General
Mr. Cheng Hock Kua – WBUAP President.

Sixteen countries with over 60 participants within the Asia Pacific region attended and participated in the three days conference.

During the three days conference amongst other issues discussed the following items were given greater attention:

1. Amendments to the WBUAP Constitution
2. Regional Partnership and Collaborations
3. Regional Women's Forum
4. Review of the Biwako Framework for Action (BMF), and
5. United Nations' Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
6. Shenzhen Statement

I was given the privilege to present or talk on the activities of the ICEVI Pacific region. My report or presentation was focused on the six goals which were developed at the Perth January 2007 ICEVI Forum and their related implementation strategies. A special mention was made for the involvement of Australian and New Zealand parents group, especially the work Paul Maning and Gayle Skinner are currently doing to promote parents as partners in the education for visually impaired students in the region.

At the end of the three days conference, the participants developed the following Shenzhen Statement.

Shenzhen Statement

World Blind Union – Asia –Pacific Mid-Term Regional Assembly

We, the participants of the World Blind Union – Asia –Pacific Mid-term Regional Assembly, gathered on 23rd march 2007 in Shenzhen City, People's Republic of China.

1. Call upon all Governments within the Asia-Pacific Region to sign and move rapidly towards the ratification and implementation of the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;
2. Remind all Governments within the Asia-Pacific Region to implement the BIWAKO Millennium Framework for Action and further request that the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) determine effective and efficient mechanism whereby this framework and the proposed Biwako Plus Five are appropriately monitored;
3. Call upon all Governments within this region to acknowledge the need to ensure that specific requirements of people who are blind or vision impaired are recognized and given greater consideration. These areas include, but not limited to;
 - (a) Employment, including open, supported and self-employment;
 - (b) Education, including inclusive and specialized education services;
 - (c) Accessibility, including but not limited to; access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas;
4. Note with appreciation, the progress which has been made by some countries within the Region regarding access to information, particularly changes to copyright laws and call on all Governments within the Region to work towards achieving greater results;
5. Recommend that all Governments, non-governmental organizations, international and regional development agencies, give support to the formation, strengthening and capacity building of organizations of the blind and organizations whose function is to serve the blind;
6. Note the progress which has been made regarding the status of blind women within the Region, and recognize the continuing need to promote the inclusive empowerment of blind women through education, capacity building, and equitable and equal participation in all facets of life;
7. Note the significance of working collaboratively and in partnership within the blindness, disability and mainstream community whilst maintaining our independence and self-determination as the voice of blind people.