

**An Investigation into the educational inclusion
of Children with a visual impairment
in Uganda**

2005

**International Council for Education of
People with Visual Impairment**

Focus of the Research

Establishing the critical conditions for the successful education of children with visual impairment in local primary schools.

Message from Larry Campbell

President, ICEVI

In 2002 a small group of persons who have been active in ICEVI for many years came together to discuss a common concern. What approaches seem to be working best in reaching children with visual impairment in the developing countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America?

Of course there is no shortage of strong opinion on this question. Unfortunately those opinions are often backed up more by the decibel level of the voices than by data generated from good research.

That conversation in 2002 led to an expanded conversation within the ICEVI Executive Committee and a commitment to include basic research as part of our strategic plan. It did not take the ICEVI Research Committee long to conclude that if we really were serious about changing the situation of the millions of visually impaired children who currently have no access to education then we needed to increase our efforts to get answers to some fundamental questions.

This initial research study by ICEVI looks at one of those fundamental questions. What are the critical conditions that need to be in place to allow children with visual impairment to be successfully educated in their local primary school?

While the question may seem simple and obvious, we found very little research within developing countries that addresses this question. This research study represents the first step by ICEVI, a national government and its partners in the international development community to gather objective evidence that can help planners and policy makers to effectively shape programs to achieve educational equity for all children with visual impairment. Today, as competing priorities vie for limited resources it is extremely important for decision makers within Ministries of Education and the non-government community to have empirical data to bolster their claims for a share of those resources. We hope this study moves us in that direction.

Message from Steve McCall

Vice President, ICEVI

To some extent the question of “What makes children successful in school?” is one that educational planners, administrators and teachers have been wrestling with since formal education began. It is a simple enough question but the answer is elusive. In the case of children with a visual impairment some might even argue that the question is irrelevant, because in most countries around the world the likelihood is these children won’t get to school – globally, the majority of children with a visual impairment are excluded from education.

ICEVI, in partnership with the leading international organisations in the field have determined to change this situation, and by the year 2015 want to ensure equal educational opportunities for children with visual impairment across the globe. To achieve this goal the organisations will need to focus their energies and resources in the right areas, they will need information about what works and what doesn’t. It’s clear that if this goal of equal educational opportunities is to be achieved, then the local mainstream school is the most likely setting where children with visual impairment will access education. Answers to questions such as “How do we get more children with visual impairment into the local school?” are important, but we must not fool ourselves that simply getting children to school solves the problem. If children feel unhappy or unwanted in school, or if they cannot access the curriculum, they will drop out. We need to understand more about the barriers to their participation and success in school and how they can be overcome.

When starting out, a worrying question occurred to me – “Is what we are planning to do feasible?” Investigating the educational experiences and environments of over one hundred children with visual impairment is a tall order in any part of the world. Carrying out a national survey in the United Kingdom would be difficult enough, but to do it in a developing country thousands of miles away, where the language, the culture and the infrastructure are so different...?

I hope that when you have read this report that you will agree that it *is* feasible to collect useful information about children’s experiences – but I can tell you that it is only feasible with the goodwill and selfless support of many people working together. Larry Campbell has already mentioned the tremendous cooperation the research team received from the people of Uganda. Everyone, from the Commissioner of Special Needs Education (SNE) in Kampala to the parent of a blind girl with multiple disabilities in a remote part of Uganda who invited us into her home to talk about her hopes and aspirations for her daughter, was so supportive.

Uganda is justly proud of its reputation in special needs education and the dedication of its special needs teachers was the key to the operation. A small group of senior SNE teachers from across Uganda helped formulate practical research methods, and helped collect and deliver the data after extensive travel in circumstances that were often difficult and sometimes dangerous. Our local research coordinator, Asher Bayo, a lecturer in visual impairment at UNISE and

the staff at Sight Savers Regional Office in Kampala bore the brunt of the logistical headaches but never wavered. My indefatigable co director Dr Mani and his staff were undaunted by the task of ordering the thousands of items of data into a manageable form.

The lessons learnt in this research activity will help in the planning and design of future studies and this should be regarded as this is the first step in a long journey. Inevitably we can provide here only a summary of the information that was collected. The report provides a snapshot of the situation of a wide range children with blindness and low vision (including children with complex additional needs). It marks their achievements, identifies some of the barriers to their inclusion in education and identifies some of the issues that cause children to drop out of school or miss out on education altogether.

The work is not comprehensive or conclusive but it is a starting point, and it provides directions to building better investigations in the future. On behalf of the research team, thank you to everyone who supported and contributed to this work - we are in your debt.

Message from Martin Omagor-Loican

Commissioner for Special Needs Education Guidance and Counselling

Ministry of Education and Sports

UGANDA

Having reviewed this research, I feel that it is an important piece of work. It is an interesting piece mainly because it gets right into the lives of persons that are amongst often marginalised. This piece of work highlights very critical aspects of access, quality, and equity too. It leads special education policy developers and implementers to understand the nature of provisions and why provisions are required. With this data first of all one will be able to understand what really goes on around the learners - the visually impaired, often in terms of what is provided at home, the thinking around him/her by the community, and it leads us now to appreciate what goes on around this learner regarding the school. This of course encompasses how does s/he gets to school, what happens to him/her at school in terms of learning, does s/he have the support in the school, does the teacher understand his/her learning requirements, is s/he given the opportunity to participate, how do other learners look at him/her as an active learner, and at the end of the day how the learner gets home. In totality, I think we can say that for the policy developer and implementer, this research is an eye opener in understanding the critical factors which contribute to the success of education of children with visual impairment. It is also helpful in developing and understanding unseen gaps, that will assist us in doing a better job in planning for these learners.

It is certainly very crucial, especially for developing countries and countries that have not met the needs of such learners to have such studies replicated in their countries. As alluded, this is very critical for inclusive education, which is naturally viewed by serious implementers as a way of life. It is of course recognised that inclusive education is not just a new slogan. It should also be recognised that inclusive education has its basic ingredients in the cultures of Africans. African cultures have always had aspects of doing things collectively, participating in solving problems or contributing together, which when extended to school situations will yield remarkable results.

I hope ICEVI replicates this study to other countries in the Africa region. We look forward further collaboration with ICEVI on how to carry forward the recommendations of this report to implementation and expansion of inclusive education in Uganda.

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PREAMBLE:

Founded in 1952, the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI) is the largest professional body in the area of education of children with visual impairment. One of the global objectives of ICEVI is that all children with visual impairment should be participating in education by 2015. As the developing nations have more than 90% of these children, the Executive Committee of ICEVI decided that there should be systematic research to study the critical factors that need to be in place for the successful education of children with visual impairment. Africa was identified as the priority region and the Executive Committee felt that Uganda, which has shown its commitment to Universal Primary Education should be selected as the first country for this research. The research team comprised Dr. Steve McCall, Vice-president of ICEVI, Dr. M.N.G. Mani, Secretary General, ICEVI, Mr. Ben Male, Country Representative, Sight Savers International, Uganda, and Mr. Wilfred Maina, Regional Chairperson, ICEVI-Africa region.

WHY THIS RESEARCH?

One of the strategic goals of ICEVI suggests that the practices in services for persons with visual impairment promoted by ICEVI should be based on strong research evidences. As the idea of a global campaign in education for all children with visual impairment is gaining momentum, ICEVI determined to undertake research studies in different regions to find out the factors that will assist policy planners to plan strategies for scaling up services for children with visual impairment. ICEVI also shared the concern of International Non-Governmental Organisations which, after prolonged years of services in developing countries, still raise the basic question of how to make the services sustainable. The executive committee of ICEVI suggested that on the basis of the experience and insights gained in the Uganda research, further research should be commissioned to investigate the questions raised to help policy planners in any country to improve educational services for children with a visual impairment.

WHY UGANDA?

Selection of a country for the initial phase of research became the next issue. While so many countries in the Africa region came up during the discussions, it was decided to launch the research in Uganda for the following reasons

1. Uganda has adopted a policy on Universal Primary Education that seeks to provide education to all including that of children with disabilities.
2. Uganda has been in the forefront in creating policies for providing educational opportunities to children with visual impairment.
3. Leading international agencies such as Sight Savers International have invested substantially for the growth of comprehensive services for children with visual impairment in Uganda and it was believed that the research would help such INGOs in planning their future work.
4. Members of the Faculty of the Special Education at the Uganda National Institute for Special Education (UNISE) were available to coordinate data gathering at the local level.

For these reasons, ICEVI took the decision to carry out the research in Uganda. The research team, after discussing the research proposal with Mr. Martin Omagor-Loican, Commissioner of Disabilities, enlisted the support of Mr. Asher Bayo, Lecturer in Special Education, UNISE, to coordinate data collection in various provinces of the country.

OBJECTIVES OF UPE IN UGANDA

The main goal of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) policy in Uganda is to provide the essential facilities and resources to enable Ugandan children of school age to enter and remain in school for the Primary Cycle of Education. The objectives of UPE include:

1. Establishing, providing and maintaining quality education as the basis for promoting the necessary human resources development;
2. Transforming society in a fundamental and positive way;
3. Providing the minimum necessary facilities and resources to enable every child to enter and remain in school until the Primary Cycle of education is complete;
4. Making basic education accessible to the learner and relevant to his/her needs as well as meeting national goals;
5. Making education equitable in order to eliminate disparities and inequalities;
6. Ensuring that education is affordable by majority of Ugandans;
7. By aiming to achieve UPE, Government would be fulfilling its mission to eradicate illiteracy while equipping every individual with the basic skills and knowledge with which to exploit the environment for both self and national development. [Government of Uganda (1998) Universal Primary Education Statement (UPE), Kampala, Uganda]

In the drive to achieve UPE, Uganda has paid attention to the needs of children with the greatest barriers to learning including street children, child soldiers and children with disabilities (Kristensen, Omagor-Loican and Onen, 2003).

The Government's commitment to the inclusive education of children with disabilities has been confirmed in range of publications since 1992. The *Inclusive Education Handbook*, Ministry of Education and Sports (2000) lists the following examples:

1. **Government White Paper on Education (1992):** The White Paper spelt out the Government's commitment to provide primary school education to all irrespective of origin, gender or social status.
It specifically supported the integration of learners with disabilities into local schools.
2. **The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1996):** Article 30 states that all persons have a right to education and that positive action should be taken in favour of marginalized groups such as children with disability.
3. **Children's Statute (1996):** The Children's Statute defines the role of Government and other stakeholders in supporting children with special needs.
4. **Universal Primary Education, UPE (1997):** The idea behind UPE policy was that children who were disadvantaged should benefit first, stating that "Children with disabilities (special needs) have priority over normal children". Today all children have free education.
5. **Local Government Act (1997):**
This recognises the participation of persons with disabilities. Article 11(d) states that "two Councillors with disabilities one of whom shall be a female, representing persons with disabilities...".

Support for children with special educational needs in mainstream schools in Uganda is coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Sports through the Special Needs Education/Educational Assessment and Resource Service (SNE/EARS) programme. In each of the 56 districts in Uganda there is an office for special needs education run by three teachers trained in SNE. The schools in each district are divided into clusters of 12 to 15, and each cluster is supported by a Special Needs Education Co-ordinator (SNECO) who is responsible for visiting schools to advise on supporting children with special needs. The system, established with support from Danida in the 1990s, provides a firm basis for the identification of children with visual impairment. Support systems with this level of sophistication are available in very few other African countries. (Kritensen et al. 2003)

As Mr Martin Omagor-Loican, the Commissioner of Special Needs Education points out in the introduction to this report, inclusion is a natural part of the socio-cultural tradition in Uganda. Accordingly the ICEVI research focused on the factors that need to be considered in strengthening the practice of inclusion and the next sections provide summaries of the research design, the data analysis and main findings.

AIM OF THE RESEARCH

The research aimed to establish the critical conditions that need to be in place in Uganda to allow children who are blind and who have low vision to be successfully educated in local primary schools.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In order to identify the critical factors it was necessary to establish the broad range of possible factors that might influence successful education of children with visual impairment. One way of capturing this range was to consider the problem at several levels of analysis.

For example:

- 1. Child factors:** e.g., amount of vision, presence of additional disabilities, gender, personality, academic ability, attitudes towards education, etc.
- 2. Class environment:** e.g., class size, attitude of the class teacher, training of teacher (general qualifications/specialist knowledge about visual impairment), teaching methods, access to resources, specialist equipment, and attitudes of other children.
- 3. School environment:** e.g., attitude of head-teacher, other teaching staff, size and location of school, policy, culture and practices within the school, retention rates, etc.
- 4. Family:** e.g., social/economic status of family, attitudes towards disability, proximity to school of family/home, and family awareness of educational possibilities.
- 5. Community:** e.g., attitudes towards disability, leadership, access to medical/assessment facilities, access to vision services, access to rehabilitation services, etc.
- 6. Locational factors:** e.g., accessibility of school, city/rural environment.
- 7. Support Services:** e.g., availability of Braille books, assistive devices, and other learning materials.

8. **Policy/political factors:** e.g., national educational policies in relation to curriculum, legislation and practice with regard to universal education etc.

Success in education could be defined in a number of ways, but for practical purposes the degree of the child's participation in the processes of education was seen as a useful general indicator of success.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

The research questions of the study were as follows:

1. What do we know about other research into this area? What does it tell us about our research?
2. What is the extent of the need in Uganda relating to the learning and participation of children with visual impairment in education?
3. What strategies are in place currently to meet this need and how successful are they?
4. What are the barriers to the equal participation in education of children with visual impairment in Uganda?
5. What are the strategies that will reduce these barriers to equal participation in education?
6. What are the critical factors that will promote the development of schools in Uganda to create cultures, policies, and practices to increase the learning and participation of children with visual impairment?

DATA COLLECTION:

The Research work was started in June 2003. The ICEVI Research Team worked closely with the Sight Savers Office in Kampala, Uganda in carrying out this study. Mr. Asher Bayo, Lecturer, Uganda National Institute for Special Education coordinated data collection for this research with the help of the following senior teachers representing regions throughout Uganda.

1. Rose Munialo
2. Harriet Kihumuro
3. Kellen Ayebazibwe
4. Jude Afema
5. Joseph Khaemba
6. Kibwika Isaac Nabbala
7. William Lukiru
8. Francis Imalingat

The research team developed appropriate tools for the data collection (given in annexure 1) and provided training on collecting information to the above research assistants in Kampala from 13 to 14 December 2003.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The following schema summarises the range of children that each data collector was asked to include in their sample. Each sample was to represent a range of ages and degrees visual disability (ie Blindness and Low Vision) and was to include children with multiple disabilities (eg blindness, physical disability and severe learning difficulties). It was to include children who attended local mainstream schools and children who attended mainstream schools which are specially resourced with units for children with visual impairment (these schools usually provide residential provision for these children, and may be distant from the children's own homes.) Each data collector also was to include children of school age who were not at school; children who were late beginners (often because of their visual impairment); children whose academic achievement/participation they considered good and those whose academic/social experiences they considered to be poor.

Type of Children	Based on age groups	Boys				Girls			
		Resource Units		Primary Schools		Resource Units		Primary Schools	
		Good	Poor	Good	Poor	Good	Poor	Good	Poor
Blind	Right Age								
	Late Beginners								
	Out of School								
Low Vision	Right Age								
	Late Beginners								
	Out of School								
MDVI	Right Age								
	Late Beginners								
	Out of School								

At the training session the data collectors drew upon their professional experience to advise the research team further on the makeup of each sample. Consequently each data collector was asked to compile a sample of 15 students with visual impairment using the guidelines below and to conduct interviews with parents, classroom teachers, special teachers, heads of schools, and the child's peer group.

- 1 child who is a late beginner
- 1 child who has multiple disabilities and who attends school
- 1 child who has multiple disabilities who is not at school
- 4 blind children (1 or 2 successful and 2 or 3 less successful)
- 8 children with severe low vision (2 successful and 6 others)

Of the 15 children each data collector was asked to identify and contact, 3 were to be receiving their education in resourced units, and the remainder in their local mainstream

school. In areas where there were no resourced units, the sample was to be drawn entirely from local mainstream schools.

Though an attempt was made to gather data from 120 students, only 109 could be included in the study.

A participatory approach was applied to the validation of the findings at every stage. The research team shared the preliminary findings with stakeholders and professionals in Uganda to obtain additional feedback.

RECORDING THE DATA

The form which constituted the main tool for the survey was divided into three sections. Part A sought details about the role, experience and qualifications of the person collecting the information. This was felt necessary because in large regions the trained data collectors needed to recruit itinerant teachers to assist in information gathering. PART B dealt with information about the visually impaired child and part C related to information sought from parents, class teachers etc. Parts B and C included sections to record comments from participants relating to key themes such as “the most important factors for success in school” and part C included a box for additional personal comments that the data collector might feel would help provide further clarification of the child’s context.

To help with the analysis, the responses were encoded and transferred to a spreadsheet.

The coding protocol adopted (Annexure 2) helps illustrate the scope and range of the data collection.

DATA ANALYSIS:

The ICEVI research aimed to identify the critical factors that need to be in place to make the education of children with visual impairment successful in local primary schools in Uganda. The research design involved attacking the question at a number of levels

- *child level*
- *classroom/school*
- *family/community*
- *external support (local/regional)*
- *governmental/legislation (national)*

The data yield has been organized to reflect this structure. The following analysis is based on information collected over a period of two months (December 2003 to January 2004) from 109 students with visual impairment, their parents, class teachers, support teachers etc.

A brief overview of the analysis is presented below:

1 CHILD RELATED FACTORS

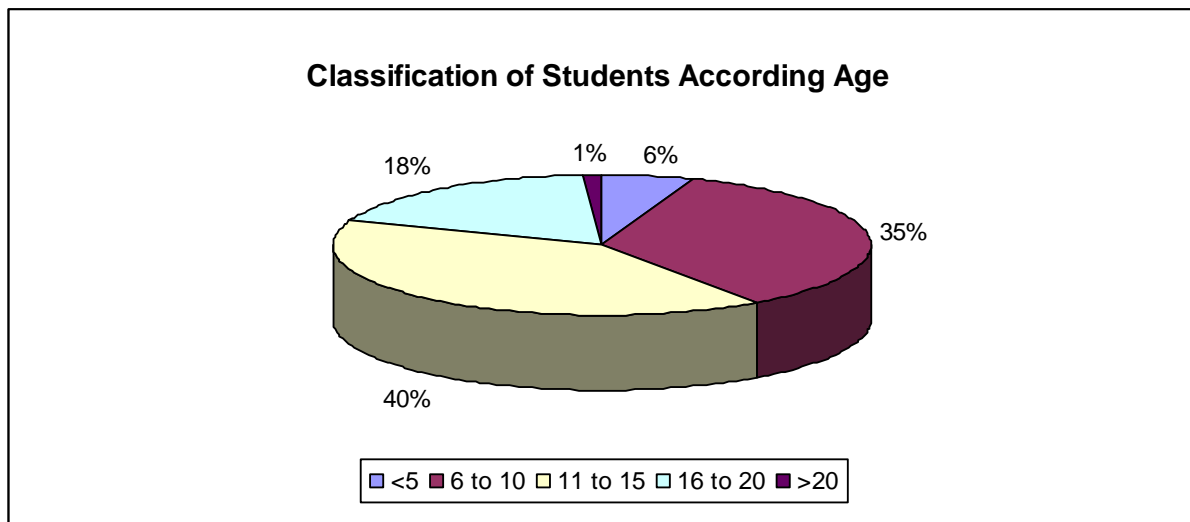
Age:

The classification of students in the study according to age is presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Classification of Students According to Age

S. No.	Age	Percentage of Students
1	<5 years	5.5%
2	6-10	34.9%
3	11-15	40.2%
4	16-20	18.4%
5	>20	1.0%
TOTAL		100%

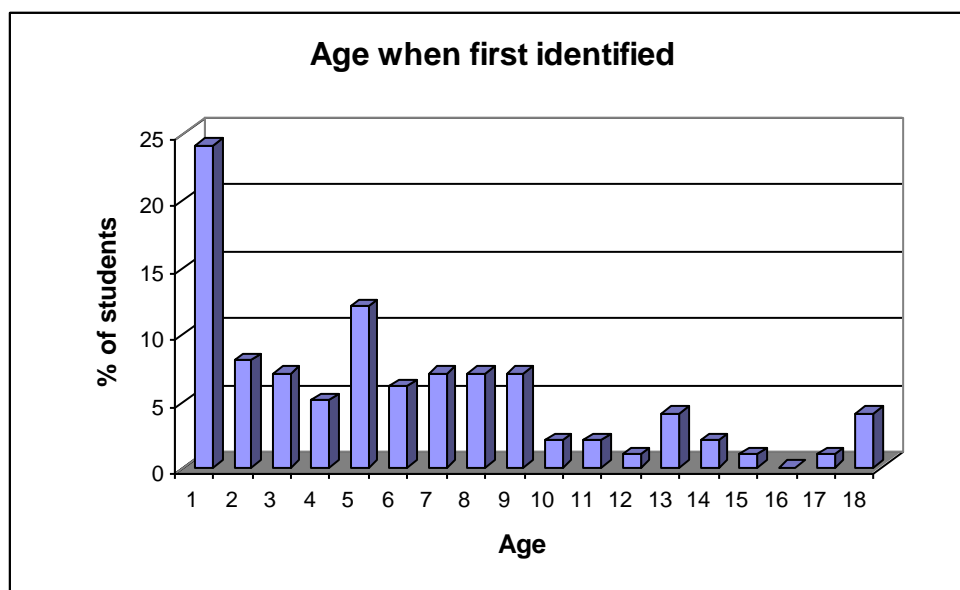
The majority of children with visual impairment in this study fall into the 11 plus age range. Their mean age is 12 and 40% of the sample were girls.



Around a quarter of the children in the sample had been identified as having a visual impairment at birth or in their first year. The children identified at this early stage were most likely to be those described as “blind” or those with easily recognized conditions such as albinism. More than half of the children were identified before the official school starting age. Around a quarter of the children were identified between the ages of 6-9. These include a few children with late onset conditions (such as blindness resulting from a brain tumour) but more commonly they are children who were born with a visual impairment. It is likely that many of the children were identified after starting school when their low vision became obvious to the class teacher in the course of early reading and writing tasks.

Table 2
Age when first identified

S. No.	Age when identified	Percentage of Students
1	1	24
2	2	8
3	3	7
4	4	5
5	5	12
6	6	6
7	7	7
8	8	7
9	9	7
10	10	2
11	11	2
12	12	1
13	13	4
14	14	2
15	15	1
16	16	0
17	17	1
18	18	4
TOTAL		100%



By the age of six, less than half of the children who had already been identified as having a visual impairment had begun school. As a result of starting late, children with visual impairment often find themselves in classes with children who are below their chronological age. Primary School education in Uganda normally runs from 6-15 but transfer from one grade to another depends on successful completion of tests. Children who fail to reach the required level of performance are required to repeat a year. This has great implications for their social and academic development.

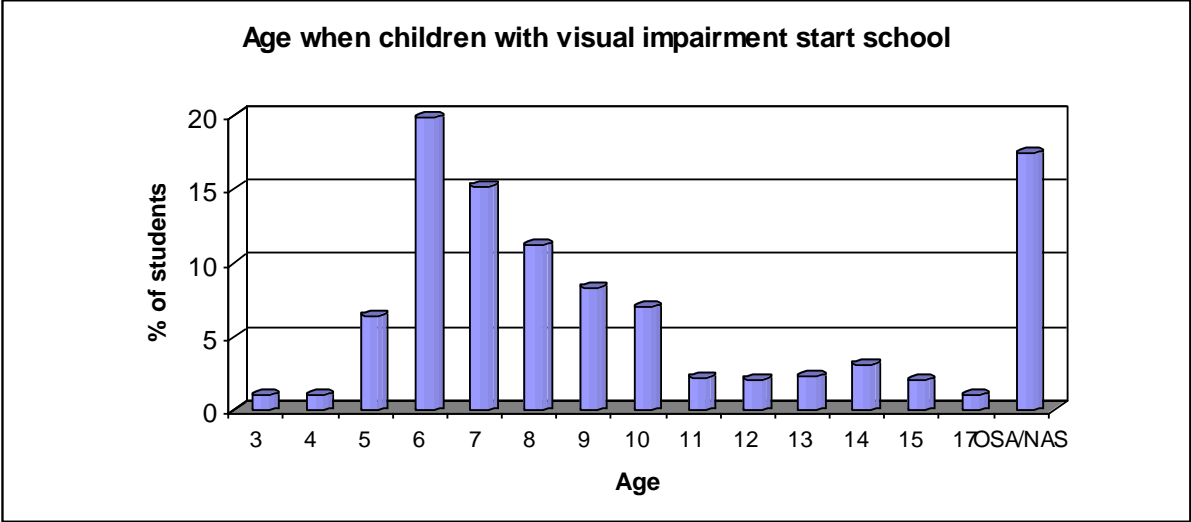
Of the children who did get to school, around a quarter did not start until they were over 9 years. The children most likely to start school after the age of 10 are children who are blind, or children with additional disabilities. These children were in classes that were on average 6 years below their chronological age.

Table 3
Age when children with Visual Impairment Start School

S. No.	Age when first identified	Percentage of Students
1	3	1
2	4	1
3	5	6.4
4	6	19.8
5	7	15.2
6	8	11.2
7	9	8.3
8	10	7
9	11	2.2
10	12	2.1
11	13	2.3
12	14	3.1
13	15	2
14	17	1
15	Of school age but not at school	17.4
TOTAL		100

17% of the children of school age in the sample were not attending school. Around 1/3 of these children were children who had dropped out of the school system and the remainder had never been to school. The children most likely to drop out of school are girls and among the reasons given for dropping out are frustration at having to repeat years, lack of appropriate support for learning and staying home to do chores.

The children of school age who never attended school were predominantly children who were blind, especially blind children with additional disabilities. Cultural factors appear to play a part here and follow-up case study work suggests that some families are reluctant to identify children to education/health services, or are still unaware that educational opportunities exist for these children.

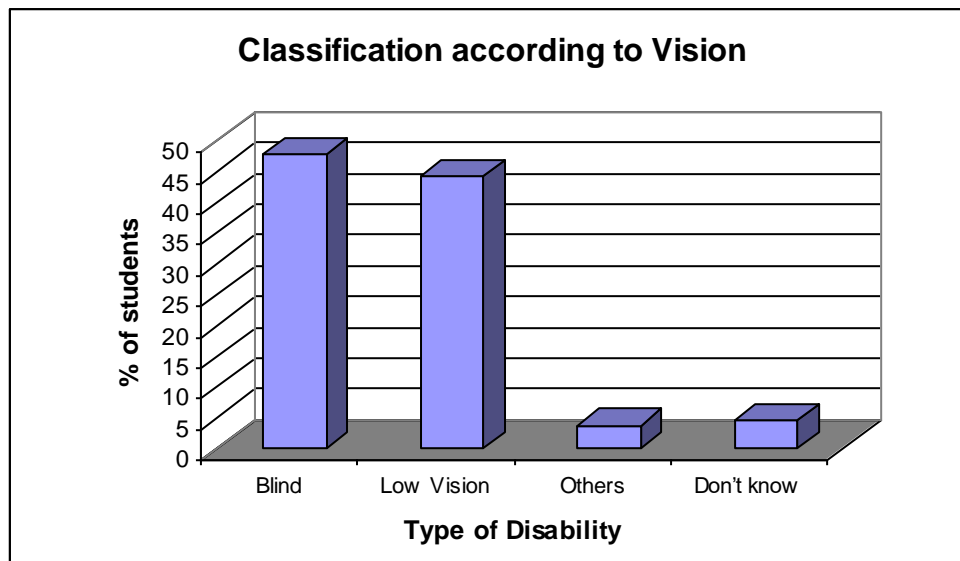


Nature of Visual Impairment

The numbers of children identified as blind or as having low vision are roughly the same. This reflects the sampling process rather than any natural divide. A small number of children were classified by data collectors in terms other than their visual status eg. MSI (Multi Sensory Impaired).

Table 4
Classification according to vision

S. No.	Type of Disability	No. of Students	Percentage
1	Blind	52	47.7
2	Low Vision	48	44.1
3	Others	4	3.7
4	Don't know	5	4.5
Total		109	100



Very few respondents were able to identify a specific visual condition or a measurement of acuity, and these details were supplied in relation to only 17 of the children. Of the visual conditions that were mentioned, albinism and cataracts were the commonest. This may be an indication that even when children are identified, the details of their visual impairment do not reach teachers in the field.

Children with Additional Disabilities

From the initial discussion with the data collectors it was evident that the proportion of VI children with additional disabilities is low by standards in minority countries. In the UK the estimate of VI children with at least one additional disability is around 70% and children defined as having “Multiple Disabilities and Visual Impairment” constitute around a third of the population (Keil, 2003).

Table 5
Classification of Children according to Additional Disabilities

S. No.	Type of Disability	No. of Students	Percentage
1	Visual Impairment with Deafness	8	7.3
2	Visual Impairment with severe Mental Retardation	6	7.3
3	Visually Impairment with Physical Disability	6	5.5
4	No additional disability	89	79.9
Total		109	100

The distribution of children visual impairment according to the presence of additional disabilities (Table 5) again may be a reflection of the sampling techniques but there is evidence of a pattern of incidence that is different from those found in minority countries. It may be that there is a much smaller percentage of children with additional disabilities but it may also be that mortality rates among young multiply disabled children in Africa are higher.

It may also be in that absence of appropriate provision these children are effectively excluded from education or they may not be regarded as visually impaired. The average age of children with additional disabilities in this survey is 12 and they are clustered around lower primary levels, repeating years.

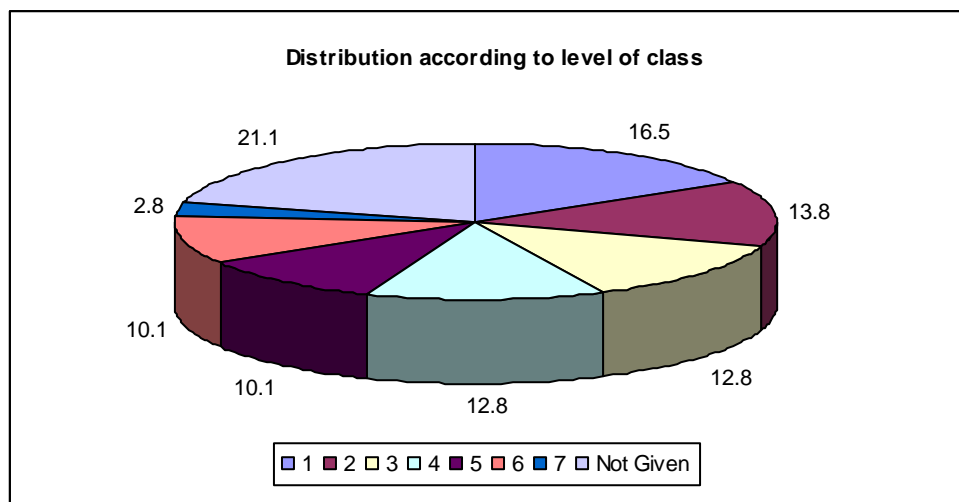
2 SCHOOL FACTORS

Educational Level

The data about the distribution of children with visual impairment among classes in regular schools are given in Table 6.

Table 6
Present standards of children with Visual Impairment

S. No.	Standard	No. of Children	Percentage
1	1	18	16.5
2	2	15	13.8
3	3	14	12.8
4	4	14	12.8
5	5	11	10.1
6	6	11	10.1
7	7	3	2.8
8	NG	23	21.1
TOTAL		109	100



Children with visual impairment in this sample are fairly evenly distributed across classes until primary 6. Around half of the children in the survey are studying in classes below standard 5 (target age range 9-10) whereas the average age of children with VI in the sample is about 12 years. This suggests that children with VI are more likely to be over age for their class, either because they are late beginners or have been kept back through lack of progress.

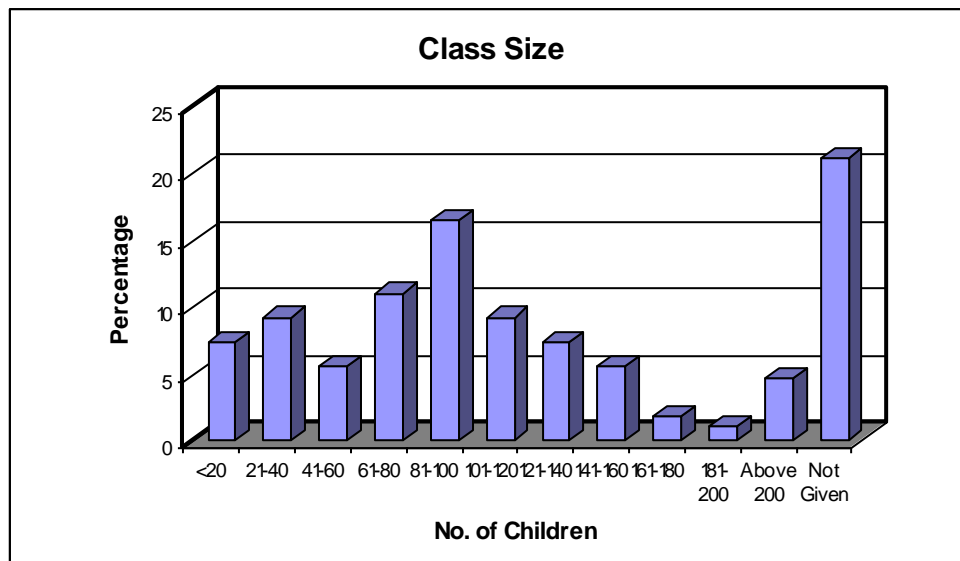
Class Size

The class size is another important consideration in Uganda. The introduction of free Universal Primary Education brought a large increase in the numbers of children attending school. The huge class sizes raise questions about the quality of education for all children but they are likely to be even more disadvantageous to children with VI since they may restrict the opportunities for individual attention. The average class size at the primary level in our sample is 91, the largest class being 283. A breakdown of the size of classes is given in Table 7. The small classes include units for the visually impaired in mainstream schools.

Table 7

Class Size

S. No.	No. of children in classroom	No. of Schools	Percentage
1	<20	8	7.3
2	21-40	10	9.2
3	41-60	6	5.5
4	61-80	12	11.0
5	81-100	18	16.5
6	101-120	10	9.2
7	121-140	8	7.3
8	141-160	6	5.5
9	161-180	2	1.8
10	181-200	1	1.0
11	Above 200	5	4.6
12	Not given	23	21.1
TOTAL		109	100



According to Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES) figures, the average class size in government schools is 94, so this suggests that our sample of schools is a typical one.

PERFORMANCE OF CHILDREN WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT (Place in class)

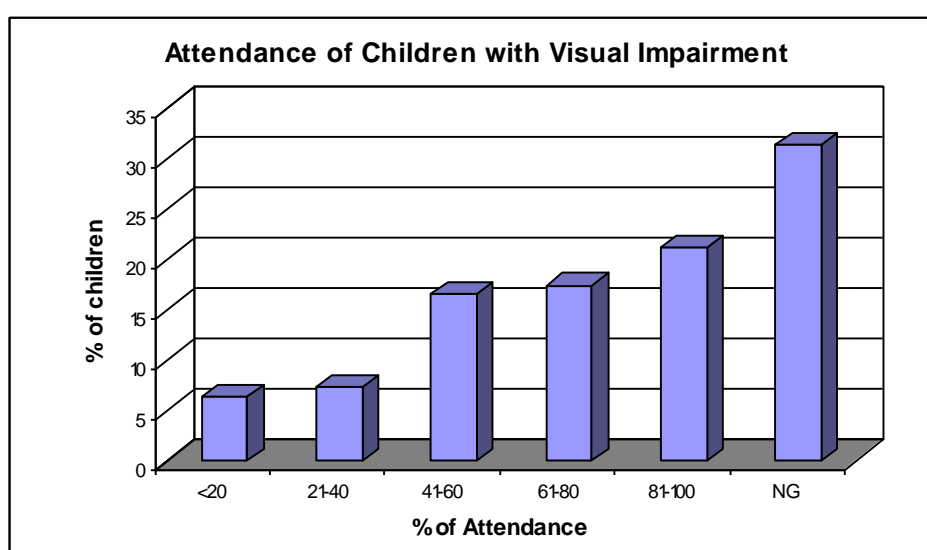
Caution must be taken about the findings on performance. Responses on position in class were received in relation to only 60% of the children and it is not clear whether the absence of a response indicated that these records were unavailable or that the child was not included in class tests. The responses that were given indicate a wide range of performance, but the average position was just above halfway in class. There are positive indications that some children with visual impairment can perform well even in large classrooms but has also to be seen in the light of the fact that children with VI may be placed below their chronological age. Further work needs to be done to compare the performance of blind and low vision children, but as will be seen later, there are concerns about the attainments of blind children in mainstream classes.

Attendance

The rates of attendance of children with visual impairment appear to vary greatly with only a fifth of the sample recording attendance rates of above 80% (Table 8). The children with the highest rates of attendance are blind children in specialist units attached to mainstream schools. Since these units are residential, this figure is not surprising. The children with the lowest rates of attendance are children who are blind who have additional disabilities, and those who do attend school typically have attendances of 20-30%. Blind children without additional disabilities in mainstream schools average an attendance of 65% while the attendance rates of children with low vision and no additional disabilities is around 69%.

Table 8
Attendance of Children with Visual Impairment

S. No.	Percentage of Attendance	Percentage of Children
1	<20	6.4
2	21-40	7.3
3	41-60	16.5
4	61-80	17.4
5	81-100	21.1
6	NG	31.3
TOTAL		100



It would be reasonable to assume that distance from school is a factor in attendance rates, since independent travel for children with visual impairment over distances may be challenging. However, with the exception of children who attend residential units attached to mainstream schools, most of the children in the survey live within 2 km of their schools (Table 9).

Table 9
Distance from Residence

S. No.	Distance	Percentage of Children
1	Within 1 km	43
2	1-2 kms.	43
3	2-3 kms.	1.8
4	3-4 kms	1.8
5	Not Given	10.4
TOTAL		100



Further analysis reveals that about 75% of these children walk to school and less than 10% use public transport. As will be seen in the next section, the presence of sighted siblings is likely to provide opportunities for children to be escorted to school so distance from school does not seem to be a major factor affecting attendance.

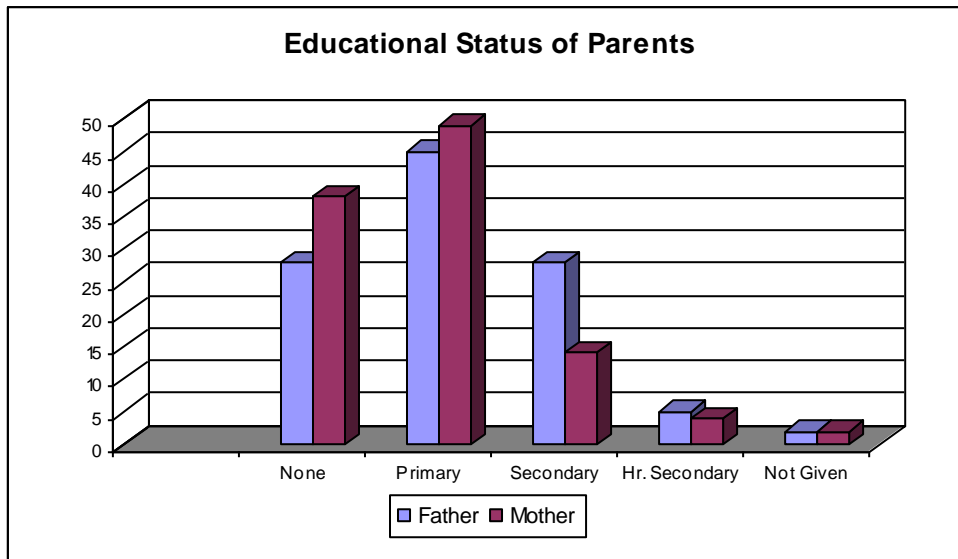
3 FAMILY/COMMUNITY RELATED FACTORS

Education of Parents

It was felt that the education levels of parents may give some insights on their expectations for their children’s education. Most parents (Table 10) received no education or underwent only primary education.

Table 10
Educational Status of Parents

S. No.	Educational Level	Father	Mother	Total
1	None	28	38	66
2	Primary	45	49	94
3	Secondary	28	14	42
4	Higher than Secondary	5	4	9
5	Not Given	2	2	4



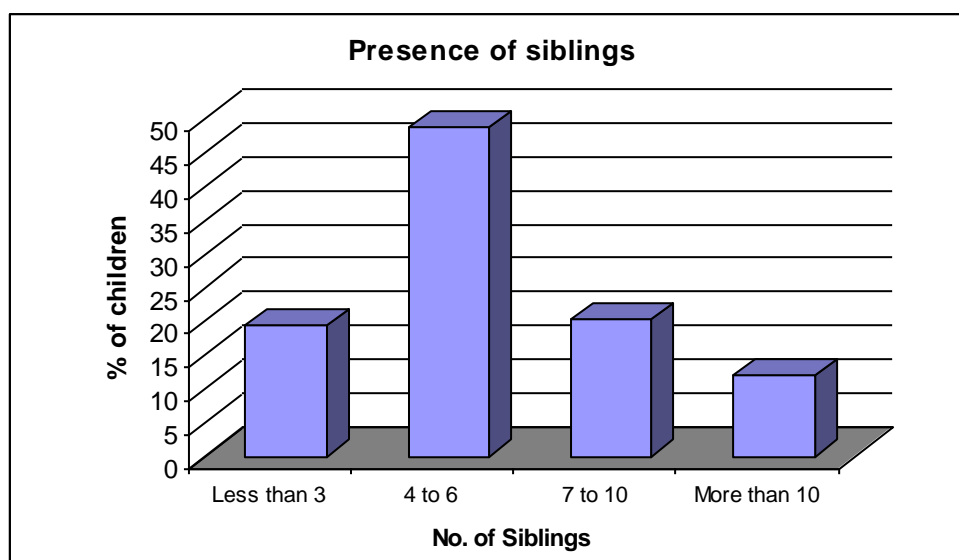
The figures suggest low literacy rates among parents especially mothers. It is not possible to link this with attendance patterns among their children, but parents with no formal education may be less likely to know about the educational opportunities available for children with disabilities.

Presence of Siblings

On average the child with visual impairment has 6 to 7 brothers or sisters at home. The details are given as follows:

Table 11
Presence of Siblings

S. No.	No. of Siblings	Percentage of Children
1	Less than 3	19.3
2	4 to 6	48.6
3	7 to 10	20.2
4	More than 10	11.9
TOTAL		100



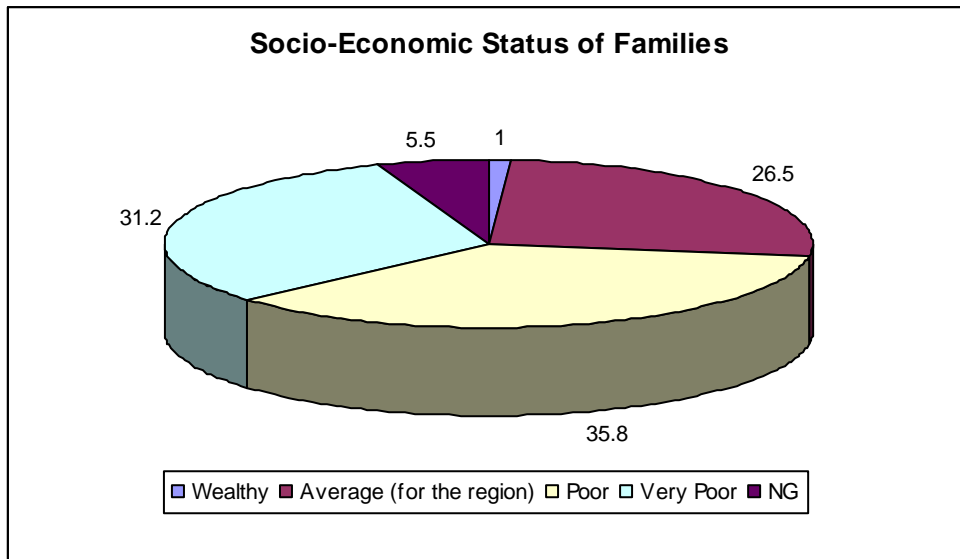
The children in the survey generally come from large families. Inevitably the question arises about whether parents have to make choices about which of their children to send to school. Although educational policy in Uganda encouraged parents to give priority to children with a disability and girls, the case studies suggest that able bodied children are more likely to be given preference when it comes to education. Children not at school were often involved in tending to family smallholdings.

Socio-Economic Status of Families

The socio-economic status has also been taken into account in this research. Most of the parents are from families that are poor even by the standards of their region. (Table 12). This simply serves to underline the well established links between poverty and disability.

Table 12
Socio-Economic Status of Families

S. No.	Socio-Economic Status	Percentage of Parents
1	Wealthy	1
2	Average (for the region)	26.5
3	Poor	35.8
4	Very Poor	31.2
5	NG	5.5
TOTAL		100



Inclusion is a way of life in Africa. African cultures have always had aspects of doing things collectively, participating in solving problems or contributing together, which when extended to school situations will yield remarkable results.

Mr. Martin Omagor-Loican
 Commissioner for Special Needs Education
 Guidance and Counselling
 Ministry of Education and Sports, UGANDA

4

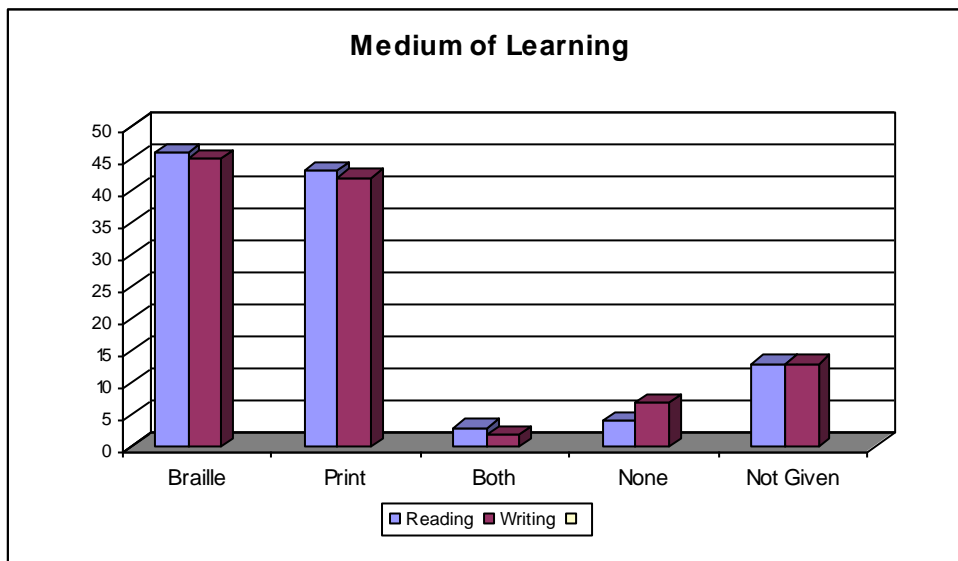
SUPPORT FACTORS

The Medium of Learning

In terms of the medium used for reading and writing, the results reflect the even split between children with low vision and children who are blind in the sample (see table 13). The figures are an indication of the medium of literacy of the children in the sample and provide no insights into their proficiency in reading or writing. Only a handful of children read both print and Braille.

Table 13
Medium of Learning

S. No.	Medium	Reading	Writing
1	Braille	46	45
2	Print	43	42
3	Both	3	2
4	None	4	7
5	Not Given	13	13



Large print materials are generally unavailable, so it must be assumed that children with low vision often rely on some other means of assistance from teachers or fellow students to access print and their learning may be predominantly oral. There were no examples of children who used low vision magnification devices other than spectacles.

Of the 21 children classified as blind who attend mainstream schools, only five have access to text books in Braille, though most have access to writing materials. Concerns are widely expressed by children, teachers and parents about the difficulties of accessing Braille and Braille tuition in mainstream schools. Although some classroom teachers receive short

courses of instruction in teaching and learning Braille, this does not seem to be benefiting the children, perhaps because of the huge class sizes. There are several statements from teachers, parents and sometimes children themselves, that express the opinion that children who use Braille need the facilities and support of a residential unit.

Social interaction/participation

Class teachers were asked to grade how well they felt that children with VI interacted with their fellow students. Teachers reported that more than 80% of children with visual impairment interact well or very well in the regular school setting. This is an encouraging response and reflects results in other studies eg Kristensen et al (2003). Teachers were also asked to report what lessons if any, children were excluded from. In core subjects like mathematics and science children with VI are excluded only rarely. The reported rates of exclusion from lessons was very low, but whether this was true of lessons regarded as extra curricular is not clear. In terms of their interactions within the community, 35% of the children are reported to be actively engaged in church or Mosque activities. The next most commonly reported interaction relates to involvement in domestic chores such as sweeping, digging, collecting firewood or fetching water (28%). The other main activities reported were involvement in music (11%) and sport (7%). Only 22% of the children were said to be involved in no community activities.

5

TEACHER RELATED FACTORS

The profile of the data collectors themselves provides some interesting insights. These teachers are in the main senior and experienced specialist teachers of the VI. More than 80% of these teachers have diploma level specialist qualifications and about 20% of them have degrees. None had a post-graduate qualification. The average age of the specialist teacher of children with visual impairment is approximately 37 years. Specialist training in VI has been available for a number of years through UNISE – the Ugandan National Institute of Special Education. According to Kristensen et al (2003) very few of the SNECOs who are charged with supporting children with SEN have Diploma level qualifications.

Perceptions of Priorities:

When discussing the priorities in education, children with visual impairment, teachers, parents and heads of institutes differ to some extent in their perceptions about priorities. **Children generally see the priorities as activities relating to vocational training followed by academic and social training.** About 10% mentioned appropriate medication as an issue.

Parents generally see daily living skills as the main priority, followed by social skills and the need for vocational training.

The **class teachers focused in on daily living skills, the availability of specialist learning materials** such as Braille, availability of tactile equipment and tools etc. The **heads of schools suggest that better teacher preparation and the availability of assistive devices are the key factors** for success. However, about 20% of heads of schools specifically cited the availability of resource centers as a requirement for effective education of these children. Further analysis is required of these factors.

CONCLUSIONS

In one sense the data confirm what practitioners in the field often suggest.

1. Children with visual impairment are likely to start school later than their peers, and continue to be taught in peer groups below their chronological age. The children who are most likely to start school after the age of ten are children who are blind and children with additional disabilities.
2. School attendance rates are variable and often low. Distance from school does not appear to be a factor here. Children with additional disabilities have the lowest attendance rates. Children who do not attend school or who drop out are most likely to be children who are blind attending their local school and in particular, blind children with additional disabilities. Girls appear more likely to drop out than boys.
3. Children with visual impairment typically come from large families that are poor or very poor by the standards of the region.
4. The lack of assistive devices is a major concern to teachers
5. Most children with visual impairment are considered to interact well in inclusive settings

Factors that have to do with the economy and social system of the country affect the education of all children, but do not appear to impact more unfavourably on children with VI. Under these circumstances, what needs to be done for facilitating better education of children with VI in regular schools?

The research suggests that the following **aspects need to be strengthened** for better inclusion of children with visual impairment in regular schools.

1. While early identification is important, it does not guarantee that children will start school on time. Following up children who have been identified would clearly help improve rates of education.
2. More training opportunities for regular classroom teachers are required along with follow-up sessions to ensure that skills are being applied in the classroom.
3. Provision of adapted materials and assistive devices and training in their use, especially the provision of textbooks in Braille.
4. Better targeting of existing resources to children identified as blind in local schools.
5. Continued support for resource centers in mainstream schools for children who are blind in the interim.

The picture presented in this summary of the research has been confirmed as a representative one by policy planners in Uganda. The information that emerged from the study is rich and varied and lends itself to further detailed analysis. This is the first step in ICEVI's commitment to research and the lessons learnt in Uganda will be used to develop studies in other countries to meet the aim of providing context-specific strategies that will help planners maximise educational opportunities for children with visual impairment.

REFERENCES

1. Kristensen K, Omagor-Loican M and Onen N, 2003, The inclusion of learners with barriers to learning and development into ordinary school settings: a challenge for Uganda, *British Journal of Special Education*, 30,4,194-201.
2. Keil S (2003) Survey of educational provision for blind and partially sighted children in England Scotland and Wales in 2002 *British Journal of Visual Impairment* 21.3.93-97

Annexure 1

Questionnaire

This questionnaire has three parts. The first part requires details of the person completing the questionnaire, the second part deals with the information about the child and his/her learning environment and the third part deals with the information that the data collector needs to get from teachers, parents, and heads of schools. Some questions in the questionnaire are open-ended whereas some require factual information from the school records. We request the data collectors to be objective in eliciting information for various items of this questionnaire.

Part A - Details of the person completing the form

(Note: These details will remain confidential – no individuals will be identified in published reports)

Name

Age

Qualifications *(Give dates and place of training)*

Additional in service training relating to visual impairment

Job title

Brief details of current role

Where do you work?

What do you do?

Part B: Information of and about the child

1. Name
2. Age
3. Gender
4. Age when identified first identified
5. Age when started school

6. Visual condition (if not known write “don’t know”)
7. Amount of vision (if not known write “don’t know”)
8. Additional disabilities.....(if none write “none”)
9. School / Unit attended
10. Standard
11. Number of children in class
12. Father’s education None Primary Secondary Higher
13. Mother’s education None Primary Secondary Higher
14. Number of brothers and sisters
15. Socio economic level of family.....(eg comparatively wealthy, average for region, poor, very poor)
16. Class results: place in class
17. Reading method.....(Braille/Print)
18. Writing method (Braille / Print)
19. Does the child has a Braille book
20. Does the child uses assistive devices such as Braille slates, mathematical devices, low vision devices, etc., as appropriate to the nature of visual impairment of the child?

21. Attendance over last year (percentage)
22. How far does the child live from school?
23. How does child get to school?
24. Lessons child is excluded from (if any)
25. How well does the child interact with the other children in school? (Very well, well, not so well, poorly)
26. Community activities child takes part in eg scouts, church activities, etc.
27. Describe the support the child receives from the family
28. What extra support does the child get in school? Describe
29. What does the child think are the most important things that he/she needs to be successful in school? (add more, if any)
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.
 - f.
 - g.
 - h.
 - i.

PART C : Information from the Parents, Teachers, and Heads of Schools

30. What does the child's parent think are most important things that he/she needs to be successful in school? (add more, if any)

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

f.

g.

h.

i.

31. What does the child's teacher think are most important things that he/she needs to be successful in school? (add more, if any)

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

f.

g.

h.

i.

32. What does the head of the school of the child's school think are most important things that he/she needs to be successful in school? (add more, if any)

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

f.

g.

h.

i.

Personal Comments

Annexure II

Codes used in Analysing Data

PART – A : Details of the person completing the form

A. Name

B. Age

C. Qualifications : Diploma –1 ; Bachelor of Education – 2 ; Master of Education – 3

D. Additional In-service : Yes – 1 ; No – 0

E. Job title : Teacher -1 ; Administrative -2 ; others – 3

F. Current role : Teaching – 1 ; Supervision – 2 ; Administration – 3

G. Where do you work?

- Ntuugamo District Education office – NDEO
- BKC Demonstration school Neora Kumi District – NKD
- Internat coordinator USUK North – USUK
- Nebbi District Education office – NDEO
- Moyo District Education office – MDEO
- Arua District Education office – ADEO
- Illi valley primary school – ILLI
- Mbarara District Education office – MDEO
- Moyo Girls unit for the Blinds Moyo District – MGB
- Tororo District Education office – TDEO
- Kampala District Education office – KDEO
- Mpigi District Education office – MDEO
- Nakasongola District Education office – NDEO
- Batambogwe Primary school Mayoge District – BAPS
- Sironco District Education office – SDEO
- Mbale District Education office – MDEO
- Rukungiri District Education office – RDEO
- Homa District Local Government – HDLG
- Masindi District Local Government – MDLG
- Kibaale District Local Government – KDLG
- Soroti District Education office – SDEO
- Mutumba primary school Bugiri District – MUBD

H. What do you do? : Teaching -1 ; Supervision -2 ; Administration -3

PART – B : Information of and about the child

1. **Name** (as it is)
2. **Age** (as it is)
3. **Gender** : Male – 1 ; Female – 2
4. **Age when first identified** : (Number to be typed as it is)
5. **Age when started school** : (Number to be typed as it is)
6. **Visual condition** : Blind -1 ; LV – 2 ; Others - 3 ; Don't Know - 4
7. **Amount of vision** : Given -1 ; Not given -2
8. **Additional disabilities** : Deaf -1 ; MR - 2 ; Physical - 3 ; None - 4
9. **School** (short acronym)
10. **Standard** (Number to be typed as it is)
11. **No. of children in the class** : (Number to be typed as it is) ; not given (NG)
12. **Father's Education** : None -1 ; Primary – 2 ; Secondary - 3 ; Higher – 4
13. **Mother's Education** : None -1 ; Primary – 2 ; Secondary – 3 ; Higher – 4
14. **Number of Brothers and Sisters** : (Number to be typed as it is)
15. **Socio-economic level of Family** : Comparatively Wealthy -1 ; Average for region -2 ; Poor - 3 ; Very poor - 4
16. **Class results place in the class** : (Number to be typed as it is) ; Not Given (NG)
17. **Reading Method** : Braille -1 ; Print -2 ; Both -3 ; None - 4
18. **Writing Method** : Braille -1 ; Print -2 ; Both -3 ; None - 4
19. **Availability of Braille books** : Yes -1; No -2
20. **Use of Assistive Devices** : Yes -1 ; No -2
21. **Attendance over last year** : (Number to be typed as it is)
22. **How far is the school from the residence?** : (<1km -1 ; 1-2 km -2 ; 2-3 km - 3 ; more than 3 km - 4)
23. **How does child go to school?** : Walking -1 ; Vehicle -2 ; Not Given – NG
24. **Lessons excluded for the child** : None -1 ; Mathematics -2 ; Science - 3 ; Others - 4
25. **Interaction with other children** : (very well -1; well -2 ; not so well - 3 ; poorly - 4)
26. **Community Activities** : (Scout -1 ; Church Act - 2 ; Others -3
27. **Support from Family** : (Scholastic -1 ; Non-scholastic - 2 ; Both - 3 ; None - 4)
28. **Extra Support from School** : (Scholastic – 1 ; Non scholastic - 2 ; Both – 3 ; None - 4)
29. **Most important things from the perspective of the child** : Medicine - DG ; Vocational Training – VT ; Recreational and Sports Activities – GS; Cultural and Social Activities - CA

PART – C : Information from the Parents, Teachers, and Heads of Schools

30. Important things from the perspective of Parents

Treatment of the Eyes	–	TE
Toileting Training	–	TT
Feeding Training	–	FT

Dressing Training	–	DT
Cultural Activities	–	CA
Vocational Training	–	VT
Daily Living Skills	–	DLS

31. Important things from the perspective of Teachers

Large Print Materials	–	LP
Specialist Teacher	–	ST
Learning Materials	–	LM
Learning Daily Living Skills	–	LDLS
Learning Braille	–	LB
Tactile Equipment and Tools	–	TET
Modification of the School Environment	–	MSE

32. Important things from the perspective of Heads of Institutions

Good trained Teacher for Visually Impaired Children	–	GTVI
Availability of Resource Rooms	–	RRSN
Introduction of Inclusive Education	–	IENS
Provision of Teaching Aids and Teaching Learning Material for Visually Impaired Children	–	PRAL
Creation of Library facilities for Blind Students	–	GLBS

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About ICEVI

Founded in 1952, the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI) is a global association of individuals and organizations that promotes equal access to appropriate education for all visually impaired children and youth so that they may achieve their full potential.

RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS

Capacity building for Teachers, Parents and other Personnel

- Nearly 200 programs conducted in 2003, 2004 and 2005.
- More than 9000 teachers and personnel trained in various skills
- More than 130,000 children with visual impairment benefitted
- Free Distance Education courses initiated

Advocacy

- Developed Joint ICEVI-WBU Policy Statement on Education
- Coordinates with International Non-Government Organisations in developing a Joint Policy Statement for Education For All.
- Working with Parent Organisations for children with visual impairment.
- Conducted Regional Conferences on Education for all children with visual impairment.
- Working with UN Bodies and The World Bank to include disability issues within their Development Programs.

Research and Development

- Preparing Concept Papers on themes such as developing standards for teachers.
- Developed Instructional Materials to help children with visual impairment learn mathematics.
- Used new technology to produce e-text materials and to address accessibility issues.

PUBLICATIONS

- The Educator (bi-annual magazine)
- Newslines (bi-annual inhouse information sharing magazine)
- ICEVI-WBU Policy on Inclusive Education
- Mathematics Package
- Research Reports
- ICEVI-WBU Joint Education Policy Statement
- ICEVI Annual Reports
- Implementation Guidelines for Projects
- Strategic Plan
- Concept Papers