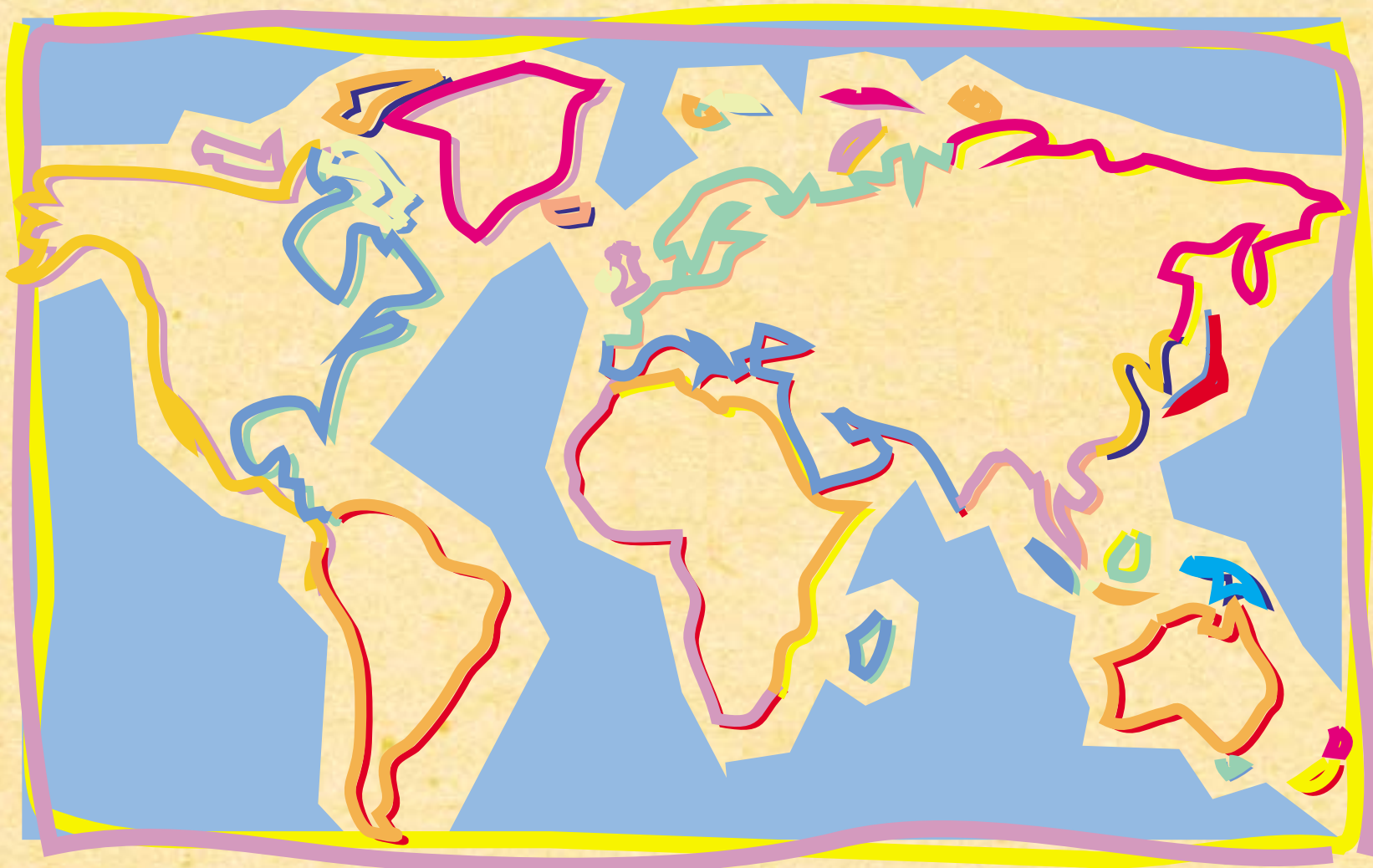
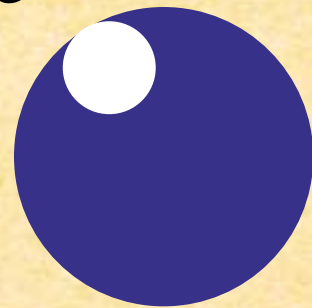
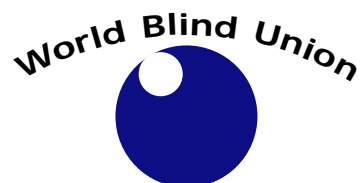


A universal voice

World Blind Union



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Introduction

We, the men and women of the World Blind Union (WBU), the recognised international voice of everyone who is blind or low vision, aim to make ourselves more widely known and bring others closer to the reality we face through this publication.

Since the brilliant inventor of the reading and writing system we now know as braille was born two hundred years ago, we blind people have reached a greater awareness of our potential through literacy, and taken our place in the world under equal conditions and with all the opportunities to which we, as citizens with full rights, are entitled.

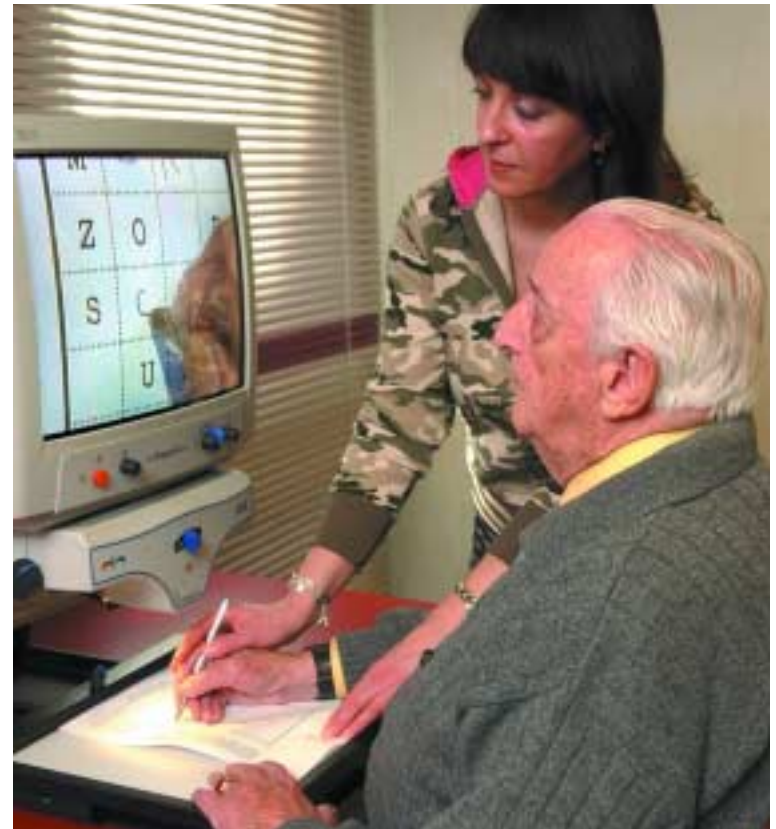
Many challenges and difficulties remain and the struggle to overcome them is a long one, so it is important we do not face them alone. We want to set out on this journey with you through the three chapters in this book, which is published by the WBU with sponsorship from ONCE, the Spanish National Organisation of the Blind.

In the pages of this book you will be able to find out more about the World Blind Union and our mission, principles,

achievements and goals, in addition to learning more about our worldwide organisation and structure. Led by Louise Braille himself and in tribute to his person and work as we celebrate the bicentenary of his birth, we will also go on a journey that explains how the braille system was created and how it has transformed the lives of so many people with sight loss, offering them the light they needed to gain access to reading and writing and,

using these skills, enabling them to enjoy independent access to training, education and information.

In the third and final chapter of the book we will look to the future with optimism and describe what the adoption by the United Nations General Assembly of the first human rights convention in the 21st century, the "*Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*", means to us. Many countries are now ratifying the



Convention and it has entered into force and become a binding treaty in record time.

However, in order to continue making progress as we advocate for the interests and rights of all people with disabilities in general and blind and low vision people in particular, we need backing from governments, public authorities and private institutions, from companies with a sense of solidarity, from social bodies, from non-governmental organisations and from the general public. This support will enable us to go on demanding and defending the financial and legislative measures needed to assist us in our long journey and to help us achieve the words of our slogan: "Changing what it means to be blind".





Braille celebrates bicentenary

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Louis Braille, who was born two hundred years ago, did not have the chance in his lifetime to witness the unbridled success of his simple but brilliant invention, a system which revolutionised the lives of blind people by opening the doors to knowledge and culture, fields which were hitherto out of bounds to them.

The birth pangs were not, however, insignificant. Braille completed his code in 1825, when he was barely 15 years old, but he passed away two years before France officially adopted his system in 1854. For decades his method faced rejection from both teachers at the Young Blind People's Institute in Paris, where Braille himself studied and taught, and from sighted people. It was even banned for some time, and it was not until 1878 when an international congress held in Paris recognised the braille system, giving it the boost it needed to be implemented gradually worldwide. Since then training, development and independence for blind people have relied largely on this reading and writing system that is now, two hundred years after it was invented, used in practically every language in the world.

Although in the past few years many have hailed the replacement of the

braille system due to technological breakthroughs, no alternative method capable of substituting it completely has yet been developed. What is more, there are numerous signs that it enjoys rude health as it is used increasingly in everyday settings to enable blind people to become more independent. Braille is still irreplaceable in this respect, as we can see, for example, with the cosmetics firms, food companies and wine merchants who market their products with braille labelling, the European Union directive that makes it obligatory to have braille signage in new lifts, or the fact that since October 2005 all medicines in the European Union must carry braille labelling.

Yet more initiatives can be found in the field of citizens' rights. Countries such as France, Germany, Spain, India, Mexico, Colombia and Costa Rica are using braille to come up with different methods to ensure blind people are able to exercise their vote independently in elections.

The logic of an alphabet

The simple and logical structure of the braille system is based on the presence or absence of dots in a cell containing two parallel columns, each with three dots. The

different permutations of dots in the six-dot cell give us 63 different combinations representing all the letters of the alphabet.

Louis Braille based his system on the so-called "night writing" developed by Charles Barbier, a captain in the artillery, to enable the military to send messages in the dark. Braille learnt about this tactile code when he was just 10 years old and, after studying it, he reached the brilliant conclusion that the two columns containing six dots each put forward by Barbier should be reduced to two columns of three, an ideal

size for the perception of a fingertip. Braille also showed that the sense of touch was significantly more sensitive to dots than to the linear system used in the code created some years previously by Valentin Haüy. Haüy's system, which used lines to represent the letters of the visual alphabet, was the one Braille had learnt when he began at the Young Blind People's Institute in Paris, founded by Haüy himself in 1784.

Using this knowledge, Louis Braille came up with a very logical code: the first ten letters of the alphabet are formed using




combinations only of the top two rows in the cell; the next ten are the same as the first ten with the addition of the bottom dot in the left-hand column, and the following ten letters use the bottom dots in both columns. After that only the bottom right-hand dot is used, and so on. Punctuation marks are represented by combinations of dots using only the two bottom rows.

Louis Braille, however, did not stop after inventing the braille alphabet; he is also responsible for adapting his system for mathematics, creating a clever system

of abbreviations, and for music, developing a vertical system that is still used to this day.

Braille and new technologies

We do not have accurate figures on the number of braille users, nor do we have research showing a correlation between the use of the reading and writing system and academic qualifications. However, from the information we do have and available estimates we can deduce it is used by a minority of the blind and low vision. This is



“Without Braille I would never know the shapes and colour scheme of a poem”

for a variety of reasons, among them the difficulties older people have in learning braille and the high cost of producing braille resource material. In addition, in recent times we have witnessed the development of new technologies based on text to speech which have reduced noticeably the extent to which braille is used, especially because a lot of information and books are easier to get hold of using electronic methods.

Both methods, however, far from being mutually exclusive, can complement each

other. In the 80s and 90s there were significant breakthroughs in computing and electronics, and we are now able to produce much more material in braille a lot more cheaply. Suitable complementary computer programmes make it possible to present the same information that is written on the computer in braille. There are now many resources that are an improvement on what most people used to have, but for people with a visual impairment many of these technological breakthroughs have opened up possibilities



“ Thanks to the miracle that is the instrument called Braille, my son is taking giant steps in life and work ”

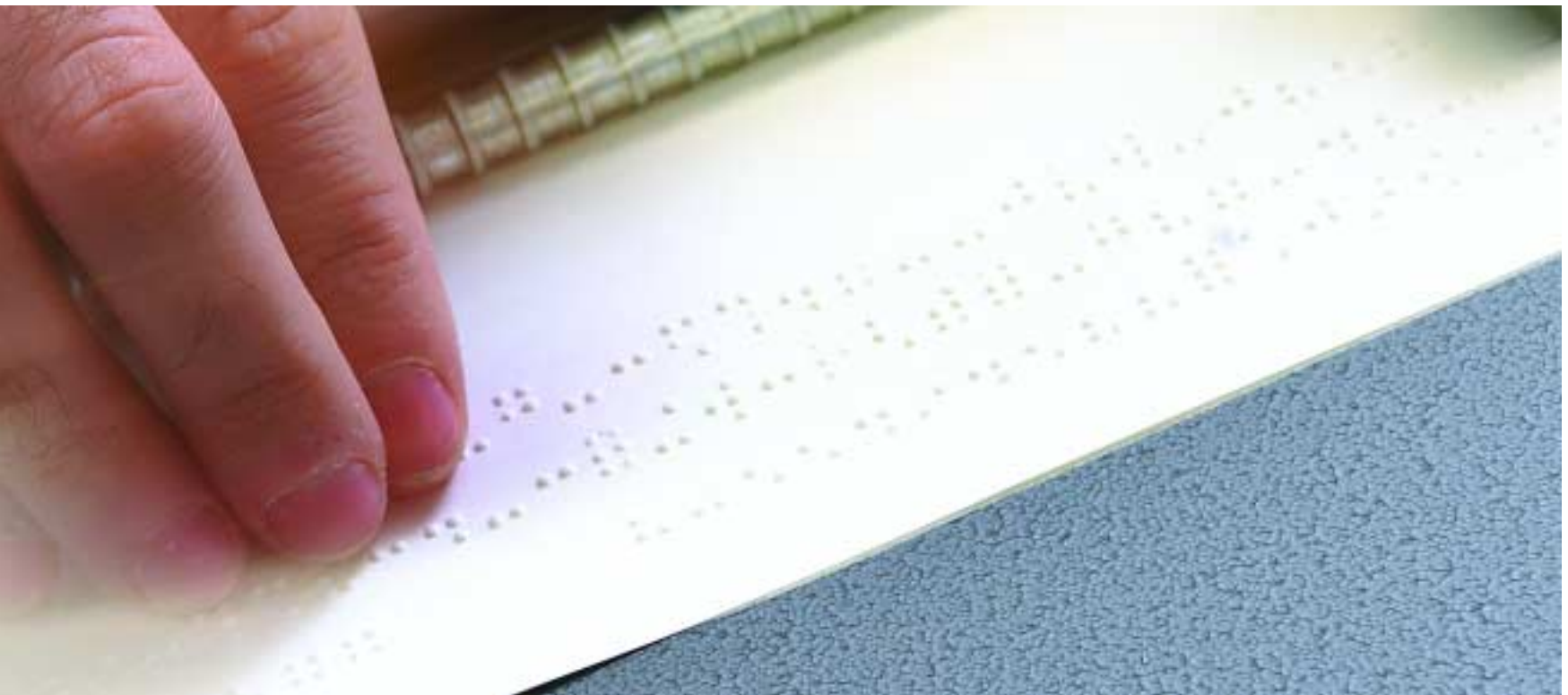
that were previously unimaginable. For example, a huge amount of information can now be stored on a CD-ROM, a DVD or other tiny storage devices that are now available and accessible to more and more people with vision loss who use a computer.

Internet also opens up brand new horizons for those of us who cannot see but have access to an adapted computer. Reading the newspaper is now no longer a utopian pipe dream for the blind. Nevertheless, the truth is that all these

innovations do not take anything away from the value of braille, and in fact they contribute to strengthening its merit. Nowadays the ideal system is to combine braille and text-to-speech software when using a computer and, more generally, when handling information.

Braille as a universal system

Although braille is used by a minority of people with vision loss, it must be recognised as a truly universal system since it is used in all languages, including



Chinese, Japanese and Arabic. In the last few years it has also been applied in minority languages such as Guaraní, widely spoken in many parts of Paraguay, Tibetan and Dzongkha, one of Bhutan's official languages. In Africa, braille has expanded recently to include Kinyarwanda and Kirundi, the official languages in Rwanda and Burundi respectively.

The World Braille Council, set up under the auspices of UNESCO in 1950, played a leading role in the application of braille in the written languages of the world. It carried

out the very important task of preserving unity in dots that were common to several languages and made a vital contribution to extending braille to languages less widespread than English, French or Spanish. Its chairman at the time, Sir Clutha Mackenzie, published *World Braille Usage* in 1953, a magnificent work that sets out general principles and includes braille alphabets in those languages where they were available at the time.

The World Braille Council then came under the wings, firstly, of the World Council

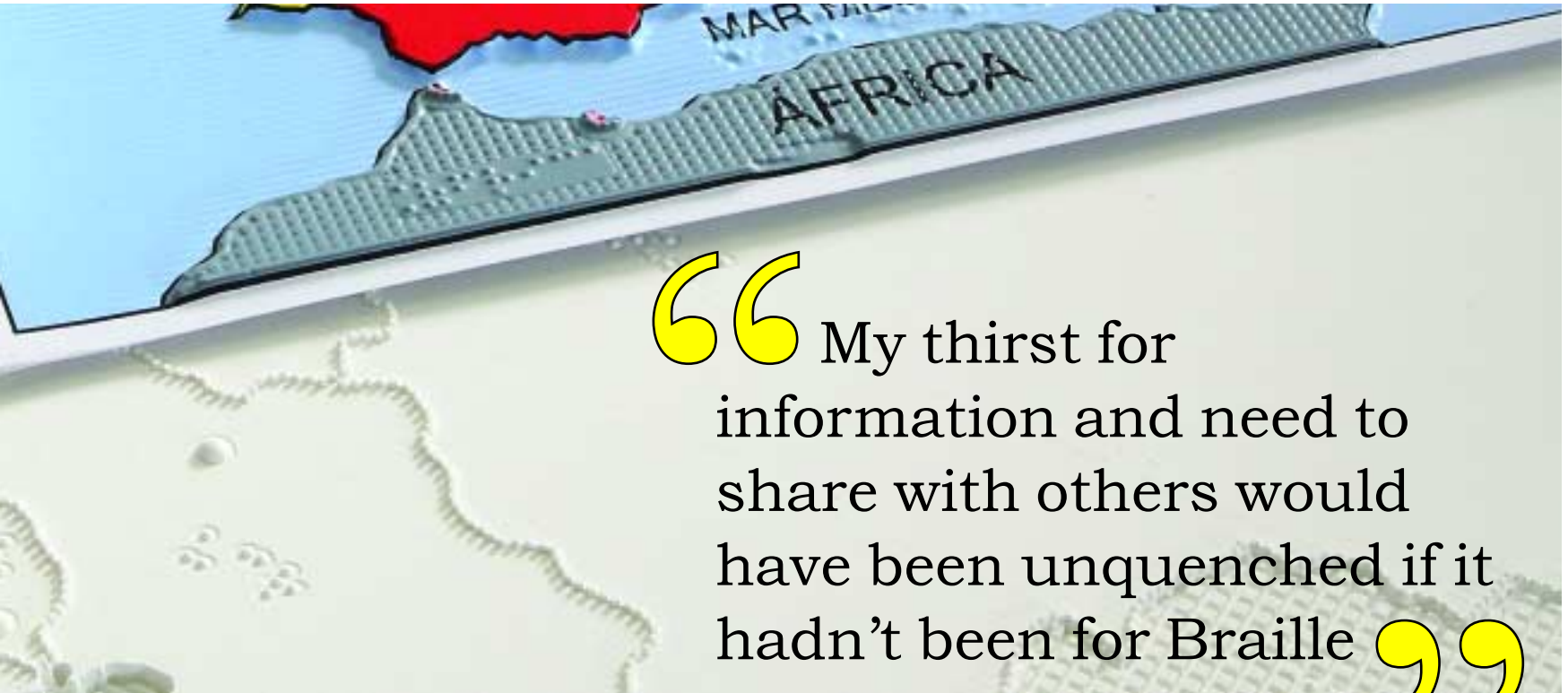


for the Welfare of the Blind (WCWB) and later, following its foundation in 1984, of the World Blind Union.

Information has led to change in the main linguistic groups and in specific languages. These changes have been undertaken without taking other languages into account and without the involvement of a universal authority, thus leading to less consistency in the use of certain punctuation marks such as, for instance, brackets, even in closely-related languages like French, English

and Spanish, while there is still a wide range of alternative forms of representing the now ubiquitous "@" in E-mail addresses.

Unification is, for many, a desirable objective, but the goal is difficult to achieve when it involves giving up things one considers to be the best for one's own language. An international braille code does exist and is used more and more, but the WBU Braille Council still has an important task ahead of it to unify and promote it.



“ My thirst for information and need to share with others would have been unquenched if it hadn't been for Braille ”

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Braille alphabet



Implements
for writing in
braille



Louis Braille's
birthplace, now
a museum



→ Louis Braille (1809-1852)

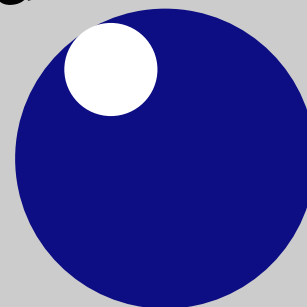
- **1809:** Louis Braille was born on January 4th in Coupvray, a small town east of Paris.
- **1812:** at the age of three, he accidentally stabbed himself in the eye with an awl when he was playing in his father's saddle-maker's workshop. The infection spread to his other eye and he became totally blind.
- **1819:** Louis joined the Young Blind People's Institute in Paris, founded in 1784 by Valentin Haüy. He stayed at the Institute for 24 years, first as a student and later as a teacher.
- **1820:** Braille was introduced to the night writing system developed by army captain Nicolas-Marie-Charles Barbier for the army. He studied the system, made some improvements and developed his own method, which he completed in 1825 when he was just 15 years old.
- **1827:** Braille became a teacher at the Young Blind People's Institute, where he taught grammar, history, geography, arithmetic, algebra, geometry, piano and cello.



- **1829:** the first version of his method was published. The second version, including some improvements, was published eight years later and contains the braille method as we know it today.
- **1852:** on January 6th, Braille died of tuberculosis aged 43. He was buried in Coupvray, where the house in which he was born still stands and is now a museum.
- **1952:** Braille's body was moved to the Pantheon in Paris, not far from the Young Blind People's Institute where he spent most of his life.

The World Blind Union

World Blind Union



Who we are

We are a worldwide movement of people who are blind or low vision, acting on our own behalf to:

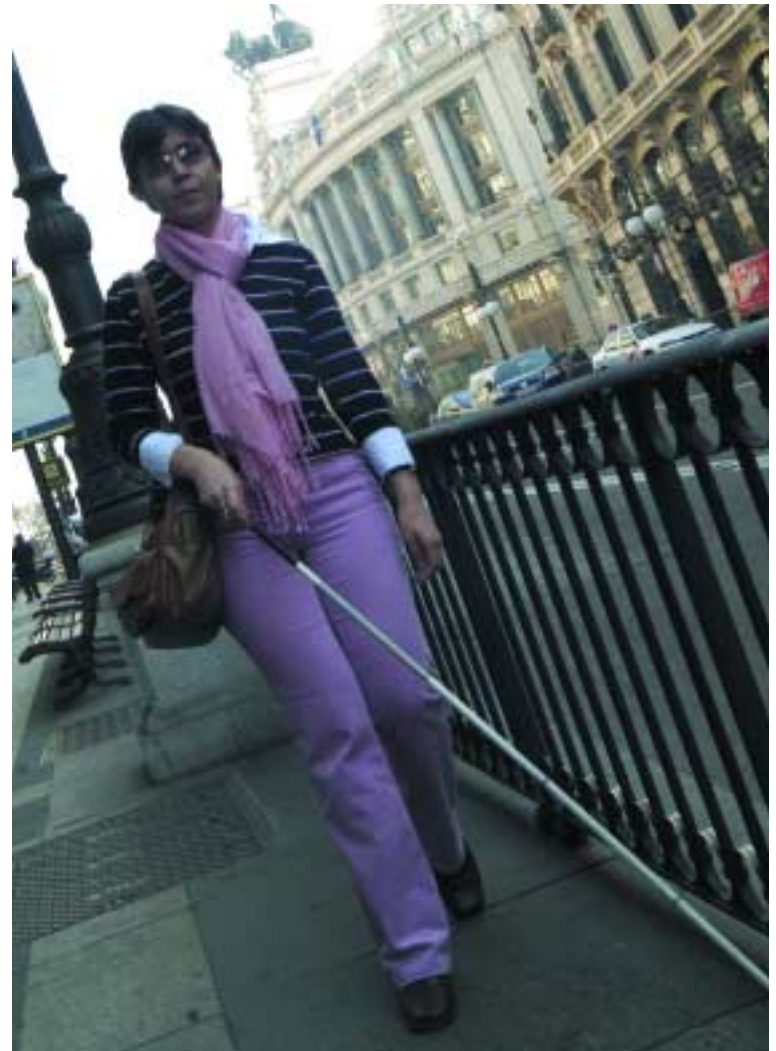
- Eliminate prejudice;
- Promote belief in the proven abilities of the blind and low vision; and
- Achieve full participation and equality in society.

Our work includes capacity building, leadership development, braille literacy, and empowerment for women, youth and indigenous people. It also includes the development and sharing of tools and resources, advocacy on key issues for people with vision loss and representing the views of and speaking on behalf of blind and low vision people at the international level to organisations such as the United Nations and its agencies.

We envisage a community where people who are blind or low vision can participate on an equal basis in all aspects of social, economic, political and cultural life.

In 2008, The World Health Organisation

(WHO) estimates that there are approximately 161 million people with severe vision loss worldwide. An additional 153 million are estimated to have uncorrected refractive errors, resulting in correctable visual impairment.





A universal voice

The WBU was formed in 1984 through the union of the International Federation of the Blind (IFB) and the World Council for the Welfare of the Blind (WCWB). However, the WBU represents over a century of global co-operation on blindness issues - dating back to the first international conference on the subject in 1873 in Vienna.

Through the leadership of the WBU and the development of its constitution, one of its achievements to date has been to provide a forum where blind and low vision people established the right to speak for themselves.

The WBU was established as a worldwide movement that brought together the WCWB and the IFB but retained sufficient flexibility in its approach to embrace the wide range of realities in the world. The WBU complied with the requirement that the majority of national delegates must come from recognised movements of blind and low vision people themselves. It is significant to highlight that when the WBU was established in 1984 it only had about sixty countries as members, but in 2008 membership now totals more

than 170 countries – very close to the total United Nations membership.

The WBU quickly became a powerful voice in the worldwide disability movement. It adopted, in its work, the use of three world languages: English, French and Spanish. It was able to strengthen the activities of its six regional unions and soon became the authentic voice of blind and low vision people throughout the world.

This was undertaken by dealings with:

- United Nations;
- intergovernmental agencies;
- other organisations of people with disabilities; and
- organisations in the international social development field.

The WBU provides a forum for the exchange of views and experience and sets standards of excellence in any issue relating to the provision of service to people who are blind and low vision. It also provides a unique partnership of organisations of the visually impaired and organisations providing services to blind and low vision people, who come together and work towards a common purpose.



The wbu team

The WBU is managed by six table officers, five of whom are elected by the international membership at the general assembly held every four years, and the immediate past president. As set out in the WBU constitution, all table officer positions, except for the treasurer, must be held by a person who is either blind or low vision.

The WBU is divided into six regions: Europe, Africa, North America and the Caribbean, Latin America, Asia and Asia Pacific.

There are a number of membership categories within the WBU:

- National members;
- Special members;
- Grouped members;
- International members;
- Associate members;
- Honorary life members;
- Sponsoring members; and
- Dependant territories members.

A country is a member of the WBU, not individual organisations. To be a full member of the WBU, at least 50% of the country's delegation must be from organisations of the blind and low vision. A country's delegation size is based on its population and ranges from two delegates for countries with a population of under 20 million to 10 delegates for countries with populations in excess of 250 million.

The Officers Board consist of the elected table officers and the six regional presidents. They take decisions on matters of internal administration, carry out financial duties in accordance with decisions made by the general assembly or the executive, hold responsibility for the development and monitoring of a strategic plan, appoint ad hoc committees and working groups to implement decisions made by the general assembly and the executive and take action as and when required between executive meetings.

The WBU Executive Committee is the main administrative organ of the Union. It supervises the work of the officers and has the power to take decisions. It is directly responsible to the general assembly for interpreting and carrying out

in detail the general policies agreed upon by the assembly. The executive comprises the elected table officers,

regional presidents, three representatives from each region and two representatives from amongst the international members.



WBU achievements

Since it was founded in 1984, the WBU has made significant progress towards its objectives in all areas of its work. The following are some of the most outstanding achievements:

- Establishment of the Institutional Development Program (IDP). With the support of Sight Savers International and the Hilton/Perkins Programme in the USA, the programme continues to undertake leadership training and organisational development work in many countries, particularly throughout Africa;
- Organisation of world forums on such issues as rehabilitation (Thailand, 1994), literacy (Uruguay, 1996) and human rights (Uruguay, 1998), as well as for blind and low vision women in 1996, 2000, 2004 and 2008 and a children's congress (Spain 2008);
- Retention of free post system for the blind. Had it not been for EBU intervention before the Universal Postal Union, this benefit would almost certainly have been withdrawn;
- Abolition of laser weapons as weapons of war, through the intervention of our human rights committee which was able to bring forward evidence of vision loss caused by laser weapons;
- Participation by WBU representatives in the drafting of a declaration including the aspirations and concerns of people with disabilities at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS);
- Instrumental in the World Health Organisation (WHO) and International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) initiative to set up the Vision2020 programme, which is currently operating in many countries as well as globally and has already led to a reduction in avoidable blindness in the most vulnerable parts of the world;
- A key contributor to the development and monitoring of the Standard Rules for Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disability;
- As an international non-governmental organisation (INGO), the WBU was a

key contributor to the development of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, lobbying for many articles to include protection for people who are blind or have low vision;

- Capacity building, and in particular supporting the development of well structured and strongly functioning

organisations of the blind and low vision – bearing in mind at all times that "only the visually impaired can speak for the visually impaired";

- A voice in many areas of life as they affect people who are blind or low vision. The work undertaken by committees in many fields such as employment, human rights, literacy,



education and women are examples of how these have been reflected;

- Special groupings that deal with pertinent issues that arise from time to time – services for the elderly (best practice), indigenous persons and sport and recreation (links with the International Blind Sports Federation - IBSA) are just three examples;
- A partner in the Education for All Visually Impaired Children (EFA-VI) Campaign in partnership with the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI);
- An arbiter of standards, for example in braille, technologies and international travel;
- Provider of scholarships through the WBU Hermoine Grant Calhoun and Pedro Zurita programmes;
- Working with UNICEF to ensure that the needs of blind and low vision children are addressed within their programmes and through the Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- Undertaking leadership development programmes for blind and low vision women at regional and national level to ensure they enjoy the opportunity for growth, self-determination and

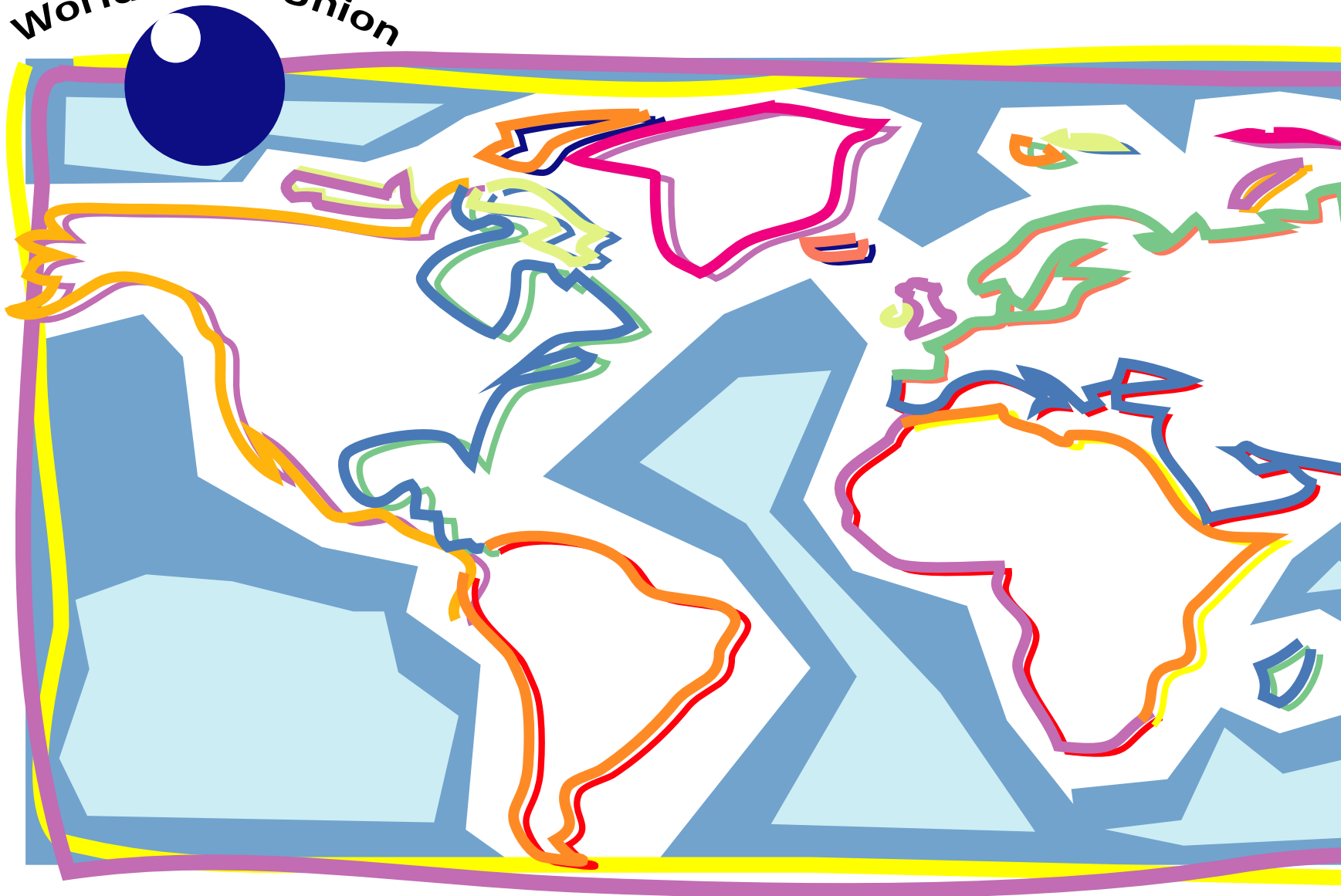
involvement in the organisation that represents them at all levels. This has included policy and constitutional changes to ensure gender equity within the WBU organisation itself;

- Urging developers of technology and everyday household goods to include requirements for people who are blind or have low vision at the design stage rather than looking to adapt what is already available;
- Physically support the maintenance and preservation of the Louis Braille Museum and activities to lobby the French Government and UNESCO to declare the birthplace a world heritage site;
- Gaining UNESCO recognition of braille as an official language in its own right;
- In partnership with the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA), advocating with the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) to ensure that accessible format books can be shared among countries, thus providing improved access to information for people who are blind or low vision.

A major achievement was the establishment of the "Office of the World Blind Union" in October 2006. Separation of governance from the day-to-day administration of the organisation will ensure there is a well-known and ongoing

point of contact for anyone wishing to communicate with the WBU, make for a smooth transition between terms and provide a central repository of information and resources on all matters relating to blindness and low vision.

World Blind Union



→ WBU - work in progress

Moving on to the next phase of our work, we will need to focus on building the resources of the World Blind Union to enable us to support members, develop our profile and



undertake projects to ensure we achieve our vision, mission and goals.

Some of the specific areas of work may include:

- Further strengthening organisations of the blind and low vision;
- Helping people who are blind or low vision to set up and develop their own organisations in countries where there are presently no WBU members;
- Developing and implementing programmes for youth empowerment;
- Strengthening our advocacy work with respect to developments in technology;
- Developing initiatives and solutions to improve employment opportunities for blind and low vision people, given the horrendous 75% unemployment rate even in industrialised countries;
- Improving access to braille instruction, equipment and materials;
- Helping WBU member organisations to understand what the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities means to them and working with them in their respective countries.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities





A binding convention

In the past, disability has been perceived as a social problem. As a result of campaigning and advocacy by persons with disabilities at local, national and international levels over the last two decades, disability is now increasingly recognised as a rights-based issue. The UN Convention is a cogent and tangible expression of this change of perception. It is drafted and adopted by the supreme international body - the United Nations - and has the backing of those national governments who have signed and ratified it.

On December 13, 2006, following five years of intensive discussions between and among governments, organisations representing persons with disabilities and a number of sectors within Civil Society, the United Nations General Assembly adopted its first new Human Rights Convention of the 21st Century – the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Less than eighteen months later, the Convention had been signed by over 125 members of the United Nations and ratified by sufficient countries to come into

force as an official and binding United Nations Convention or Treaty.

While it was made clear at the outset that the Convention would be based on the contents of other UN Conventions and treaties and that no new rights would be conferred on persons with disabilities, the Convention does, however, restate and redefine these rights in relation to the requirements of persons with disabilities.

The role of the WBU

Throughout the five years of work of the Ad Hoc Committee established by the UN to work on the Convention, the international disability movement sought to influence the scope and content of the Convention. An International Disability Caucus (IDC) was formed. From its inception, the World Blind Union was a fully participating member of the IDC. By the time the AHC had completed its work, over sixty disability groups and organisations were members of the IDC. They attended AHC meetings, commented on the draft text and lobbied States' delegations. Although the IDC members, individually and collectively, had a considerable influence on the scope and content of the Convention, it was the States' delegations that finally decided what is in the Convention text.

The World Blind Union was involved every step of the way, and as the internationally recognised organisation speaking on behalf of blind and low vision people worldwide, its representatives worked tirelessly to ensure that the new Convention would reflect the specific

needs and aspirations of the blind and low vision, while at the same time working co-operatively with other disabled persons organisations to ensure that the convention adequately addresses the requirements of all persons with disabilities.





The Convention's importance to us: unique needs, equal rights

While there is no question that other UN Conventions, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Rights of Women and the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights, all apply equally to people who are blind or low

vision - and indeed all persons with disabilities - the reality is that the unique needs of those who are blind or low vision were not being addressed within the context of these more generic instruments. The fact that less than 10% of blind and low vision children living in developing countries have access to an education, the fact that unemployment among blind and low vision people is roughly 75%, even in industrialised countries, the fact that blind and low vision women are disproportionately subjected to violence and abuse and infected by the HIV virus - all reflect the reality that the needs of blind and low vision people, as well as those with other disabilities, were not being addressed within the present system.

The Convention deals with many aspects of life that would be taken for granted by people without disabilities but which are not enjoyed on an equal basis by blind and low vision people, for example the right to equal recognition before the law, the right to have access





to the justice system, freedom from violence, exploitation and abuse, the right to freedom of expression and access to information. We generally consider these to be inalienable and fundamental rights. However, for people who are blind or low vision these rights can be denied, whether through discriminatory practices, the absence of accommodations or through lack of knowledge and understanding on the part of the providers of services and programmes. Generally there is no deliberate action to deny rights or participation or services to persons who are blind or low vision, but because the blind and low vision must access and process information in a different way, the absence of special measures to ensure access and inclusion will, de facto, result in exclusion. That has been the reality facing people who are blind or low vision for decades, and it was well understood by our members and leaders at national, regional and international levels that this situation would not improve without an internationally recognised and enforceable mechanism.



Key elements of the Convention for people who are blind or low vision

The following are some of the specific Convention articles of particular importance to blind and low vision people:

- The article dealing with **Children with disabilities** ensures that children with disabilities enjoy the same rights and fundamental freedoms as non-disabled children. Of particular importance for blind and low vision children is the provision of technical aids, equipment and training in such areas as braille and other accessible means of communication, support to access programmes and receive services, the ability to interact with other blind and low vision children and information and support to children and their parents to ensure that they can avail themselves of any services and support available to them;
- The article dealing with **Accessibility** requires governments to take appropriate measures to enable persons with disabilities to access, on an equal basis with others, the physical environment, transportation, information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and other facilities and services open or provided to the public. For the blind and low vision, this means access to information in accessible formats including braille, access to new technology such as, for instance, Automated Banking Machines and so forth;
- The article on **Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies** calls for governments and international aid organisations to ensure that persons with disabilities are not at increased risk and that they have access to emergency relief programs. The reality has been that, in the provision of relief programmes, blind and low vision people are generally unable to access them, and are thus at increased risk;
- The article on **Equal recognition before the law** ensures that all persons,

regardless of their disability, are recognised as persons, can own property and, for example, enter into contracts. For people who are blind or low vision, this means acceptance of their signature on a legal document;

- The article on **Access to justice** requires that persons with disabilities have full access to the justice system. For people who are blind or low vision this can include, for example, the acceptance of identification of offenders by touch, sound rather than by visual

identification only. It also includes the right to have court documents provided in accessible formats;

- The article dealing with **Freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse** is intended to introduce special measures to protect persons with disabilities, and in particular women and children, from such treatment;
- The article dealing with **Personal mobility** provides for training and equipment to enable persons with disabilities to get around safely and



independently. For blind and low vision people, this can mean the availability and training in such necessary tools as the use of the white cane or guide dogs;

- The article dealing with **Freedom of expression and access to information** requires information to be made available in accessible formats and also encourages the sharing of accessible materials across international borders;
- The article on **Education** requires that all children with disabilities have access to appropriate education. For blind and

low vision students, this means the ability to learn braille, having qualified teachers and enjoying access to the full range of subjects offered;

- The Article on **Habilitation and rehabilitation** encourages governments in States Parties to take effective and appropriate measures to enable persons with disabilities to attain and maintain maximum independence, full physical, mental, social and vocational ability, and full inclusion and participation in all aspects of life. For



blind and low vision people, this means the provision of equipment and training to help maximise skills;

- The article on **Work and employment** calls on governments to put measures in place to facilitate access to employment for all persons with disabilities. This is particularly important for people who are blind or low vision, who tend to be much less likely to gain employment than non-disabled people and even people with other types of disabilities;
- The article on **Participation in political or public life** should address the difficulties currently faced by blind

and low vision people in order to vote independently in elections, access information about election candidates and so forth;

- The article on **Participation in cultural life, leisure, recreation and sports** recognises the importance for persons with disabilities of participating in all aspects of social and community life. For those who are blind or low vision, gaining access to exhibits at museums, access to books in accessible formats and being able to learn and participate in sports are all important ways to exercise these rights.



WBU's ongoing role regarding the convention: changing what it means to be blind



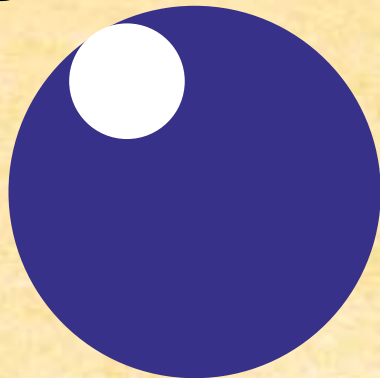
While the UN Convention is an international instrument, developed within the United Nations system, its successful implementation will and must be effected at national level. To that end, the World Blind Union will work closely with its national members, through its regional unions, to ensure that our members understand the Convention, its implications and opportunities for blind and low vision people, and have tools to work with their own governments around the ratification and implementation of the Convention. We are providing and will continue to provide information to our members about particular key aspects of the Convention and ideas for implementation at the local level. Moreover, at international level the WBU continues to work closely with other International Disabled Persons Organisations in the International Disability Alliance, monitoring progress and sharing successes and concerns with the relevant UN bodies tasked with monitoring the Convention.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was an evolution in its development and will be an evolution in its implementation. Change does not happen overnight. However, with the clear expression of the will to change, through the entry into force of the Convention and its ratification at national level, change

will happen. And the World Blind Union will be part of that evolution and change – providing information and tools, sharing our knowledge and expertise – and indeed changing what it means to be blind or low vision on behalf of the approximately 160 million people with visual impairment we represent around the world.



World Blind Union



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