

## **Fiji Society for the Blind**

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The Fiji Society for the Blind runs a school for blind and vision impaired children in Suva. It also employs eight community based rehabilitation fieldworkers to assess and assist vision-impaired clients in the wider community. None of the staff members at FSB has formal Orientation and Mobility training and they struggle to obtain sufficient resources for the school and community based work.

Vision impairment is associated with shame in the Fijian culture and as a result, many clients live isolated lives. CBR Fieldworkers are persistent in their efforts to identify children at risk, and to encourage their parents to allow intervention and referral to the School for the Blind.

During 2005, Orientation and Mobility Instructor, Lil Deverell, from Guide Dogs Victoria, Australia was able to offer in-service training to staff at the Fiji Society for the Blind. Topics for the one-day workshop included acquired brain injury, formulating O&M goals, teaching thinking skills, children with multiple disabilities and a variety of mobility aids.

Further staff training is needed in the following areas:

- Assistive technologies
- Eye anatomy, physiology & pathology
- Functional low vision assessment strategies
- Active learning theory
- Learning media assessment
- Orientation and Mobility, especially long cane

- Observation and individual consultation with teachers regarding students and their individual program plans. (VTVI; O&M; Orthoptist; OT)

Needed resources identified by staff include:

- Long canes, cane tips and bundu basher tips
- Magnifiers
- Perkins Brailers
- Alternative Braille technologies & software
- CCTVs x2
- Braille story books for all levels
- Tactile maps – world
- Tactile teaching aids; 3D models; tactile letters and numbers
- Puzzles, games, toys
- Science kit, including magnets

Any resources or offers of in-service training for staff would be warmly received.

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