

## **Using ICT for the Multiply-Disabled Visually Impaired (MDVI)**

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Visually impaired people with profound cognitive impairments are presented with particular challenges when accessing ICT. Assistive software available to compensate for sight loss (speech and enlargement) is often inaccessible to users with profound cognitive difficulties. The software and the method of training itself must be customised to meet their specific needs.

At the Bartiméus Sonneheerdt Institute, we are piloting an innovative project to enable MDVI adult clients to access ICT for education and leisure through mediated learning.

With software developers, we have introduced B-link, a webtool that specifically meets the needs of the MDVI. With the use of input devices, these individuals are able to independently record video messages, send these to friends and family, listen to received messages, play audiogames, listen to music and more. The webtool is self-standing, i.e. it has no requirement for additional assistive software, and can therefore be customised for user access requirements.

Through a series of structured computer activities involving mediated learning, we have tested B-link on MDVI clients – screen and non-screen users. We have discovered that with special provision and software, such as B-link, ICT can have an enormous impact on the lives of these individuals in terms of learning, communication and personal happiness.