

The Belize Council for the Visually Impaired



Annual Report
2020



The Vision

The Belize Council for the Visually Impaired's vision is of a Belize where no one is needlessly blind and those who are irrevocably blind are integrated as equal members in all aspects of society.

The Mission

The Belize Council for the Visually Impaired is a non-profit organisation committed, through a comprehensive programme, to prevent and cure blindness, restore sight and to rehabilitate and educate people who are blind to enable them to use their talents and abilities to live independent lives.

Headquarters:

Belize Council for the Visually Impaired
Lions Building
Princess Margaret Drive
Belize City

US donations can be sent to:

BCVI Foundation

2800 11th Ave. S., Suite 14
Great Falls, MT 59405
USA

Accountant:

Felix Reyes
Chartered Accountant
5760 Meighan Avenue
Belize City

The Belize Council for the Visually Impaired is a Company Limited by Guarantee and is Registered as a Non-Government Organization—Certificate No.12/02

Bankers:

Belize Bank Ltd
Albert & Regent Streets
Belize City

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From the President & Director



J. M. Musa

Joan Musa
Executive President



CA Musa

Carla Ayres Musa
Executive Director

We have done much reflection over the past year as we watched the COVID-19 Health Crisis take over the World. For decades we worked toward the goal of Vision 2020 and what should have been a year of celebration in our field of eye health. But the pandemic stopped us all in our tracks.

BCVI closed its doors in March and reopened in May with a small team in Belize City, Stann Creek and Punta Gorda. Although we opened slowly by selling only medications and dispensing finished glasses, it quickly became evident that patients were in dire need of our eye care services. With support from the Ministry of Health, our partners in eye care and our dedicated team BCVI was able to open its doors by June 2020 with necessary COVID-19 prevention measures implemented in our clinics countrywide.

Although international surgeons are still unable to enter the country, our clinical ophthalmologist continues to examine and treat all patients requiring secondary eye care services. We look forward to our surgeons returning in 2021.

The economic impact of this pandemic has increased the need and demand for equitable eye care services and BCVI will continue to work to ensure that our services stay alive.

Thank you all for your unwavering support.

The BCVI Team (Staff and Board Members)

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Executive President	Joan Musa
Vice President	Donovan Reneau
Treasurer	Sheena Castillo
Secretary	Alice Riveroll
Legal Advisor	Dolores Balderamos Garcia

EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

Regina Fonseca
Kamela Palma
Sharon Pollack
Natalia Rodriguez

At the end of 2020, BCVI had a total of 25 staff to carry out its activities.

ADMINISTRATION

Carla Ayres Musa - Executive Director
Mark Mitchell - IT Officer
Clifton Borland - Equipment Maintenance Officer
Carmencita Cruz - Finance Officer
Jacqueline Acosta - Administrative Assistant
Carol Martinez - Custodian
Maria Rowland - Custodian
Alfred Borland - Driver/Messenger

REHABILITATION

Sagrario Clarke - Itinerant Teacher, Northern Districts
Victor Chan - Rehabilitation Programme Assistant
Arjenis Ruiz - Rehabilitation Programme Assistant

OPTICAL LABORATORY

Karina Samuda - Lab Manager
Rudy Cocom - Senior Optical Technician

SECONDARY EYE CARE

Dr Zoraida Diaz - Ophthalmologist
Caroline Usher - Nurse in Charge
Teona Ruiz - Nurse in Charge (Training)
Nauget Buckley - Practical Nurse
Mara Burgess - Administrative Assistant

PRIMARY EYE CARE

Jackie Graham Hemsley - Primary Eye Care Manager
Freddy Nicholson - Optometrist, Belize City
Rita Witzil - Optometrist, Orange Walk, Corozal, San Pedro
Leyanis Romero - Optometrist, South
Anna Salam - Refractionist, Stann Creek
Randolph Williams - Refractionist, Toledo
Elia Slusher - Ophthalmic Assistant, Orange Walk



Organisational & Staff Development

Despite the setbacks brought about by the global health crisis, BCVI was fortunate to have been able to continue the development of our human resources and services.

In 2019, the Lions Club International Foundation (LCIF) in partnership with Lions Club of Belize City approved a project to expand the BCVI Clinic to include more space for the Primary and Low Vision Clinics as well as to create a Rehabilitation Resource Center. Ground was broken in September 2020 with an expected opening date of May 2021.



Executive President Joan Musa and Director Carla Ayres Musa attended the 1st Annual Vision Gala hosted by long-time friend of BCVI Dr Inder Singal of the Adarsh Charitable Foundation which has supported three scholarships for BCVI (2 in Optometry and 1 for Medical School with focus in Ophthalmology). Our Medical student continues her studies in Costa Rica, despite the COVID-19 global health crisis. However, the Optometry students are taking their courses online with Galileo University while remaining in Belize.



After a months-long overhaul, the BCVI Dangriga Clinic opened its doors in February. The larger space is able to more effectively conduct clinics and comfortably accommodate patients. With the clinic's closure in early 2020, BCVI loaned the building to the Southern Region for patients unable to travel home while awaiting COVID-19 test results.



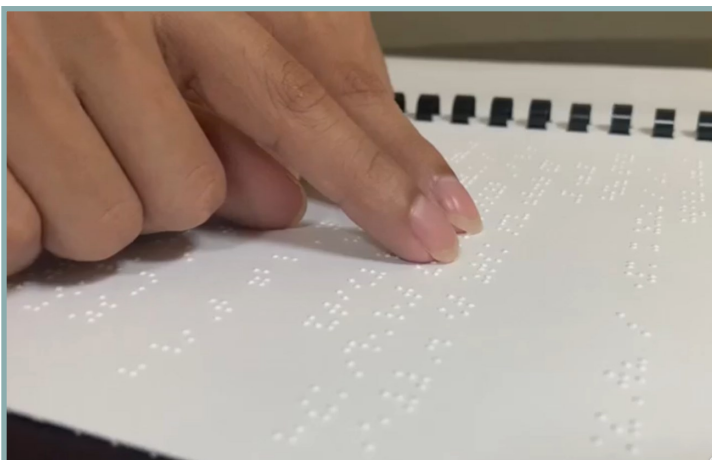
Organisational & Staff Development



In February 2020 BCVI's Optometrists and refractionists attended a training session with Pediatric Ophthalmologist Dr Millicent Peterseim on Pediatric Practice Guidelines. Dr Peterseim, who is a long-time friend of BCVI, demonstrated how to properly examine children's eyes. She also shared other useful techniques on how to do cycloplegic and other exam on their eyes to achieve maximum results.



BCVI's newest Ophthalmic Assistants (OAs) and Rehabilitation Field Officers (RFOs) were thrilled to receive training in eye health from President Joan Musa. The week-long session included topics from the basic anatomy of the eye and eye care referrals to the Rehabilitation and Education Programme.



RFOs also started the online training course with Hadley School for the Blind in "Introduction to Braille". Although they were unable to complete the course, we plan to resume in 2021 with new and existing rehabilitation staff. Mrs. Joan Samuels, BCVI's former Rehabilitation Coordinator, has agreed to provide online training in CBR next year, once the RFOs have completed the Braille course.

Eye Care & Rehabilitation Services

The Belize Council for the Visually Impaired is the only public eye care provider in the country. We aim to prevent blindness, restore vision and rehabilitate those who are irreversibly blind to live independently.

Our Primary Eye Care Clinics are strategically located throughout the country where comprehensive examinations are done and include a refraction to check if the vision will improve with glasses. The clinics are supported by an optical lab which produces the prescription glasses and sends them back to the clinics where they are then dispensed to the patients.

In 2020, although services were suspended for a few months due to COVID-19, thousands of patients accessed eye care once we reopened with strict health protocols. A total of 6,530 people were examined at the primary level where 2,849 prescription glasses and 1,068 reading glasses were dispensed.

Dr Kinloch Nelson and the Grace and Holy Trinity Group visited in February and screened 1,000 children and teachers at schools in Cayo. The group also partnered with BCVI's Optical Lab to produce glasses for 100 patients.

A total of 649 patients needing further treatment were referred from our Primary Clinics to our Ophthalmologist, Dr Zoraida Diaz, at our Secondary Eye Care Clinic (SEC) in Belize City. A total of 1,512 patients were seen at the SEC.



Hand sanitizing and temperature checks are mandatory at all BCVI clinics



Drs Banach and Diaz examine a patient

Cataract surgeons Dr Michael Wong, Dr Sanjay Smith and Dr Janis Dezkalnn, along with Pediatric Ophthalmologist Dr. Millicent Peterseim, Retinologist Dr Michael Banach and Dr Baxter McLendon all visited prior to BCVI closing in March due to the COVID-19 crisis.

The lockdown of Belize and our borders significantly impacted our surgical unit and laser treatment since our visiting surgeons were unable to visit. Prior to this closure, a total of 50 cataract surgeries and 53 laser treatments were provided by visiting teams.

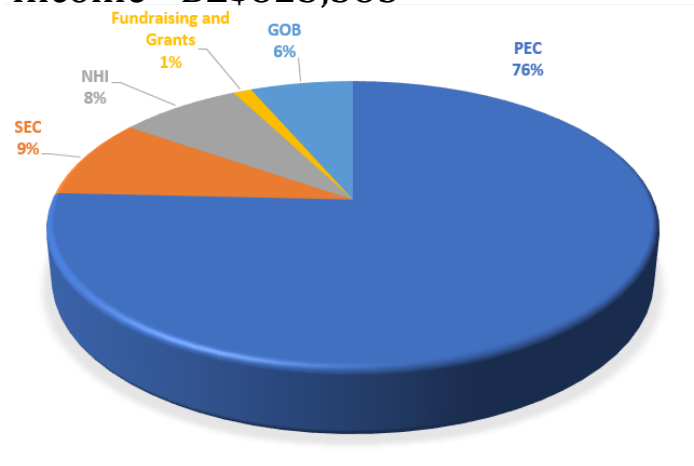
A total of 15 patients were diagnosed as irreversibly blind or low vision and referred the Rehabilitation Programme. Despite the lockdown and closure of schools, we continued to provide support via telephone, email and social media. Online training sessions were conducted to support teachers and we continued to provide books and text documents both electronically and in Braille. BCVI was thrilled to partner with client Juan Reina and the Image Factory Art Foundation on a Podcast and AudioBook Series to be released in 2021.



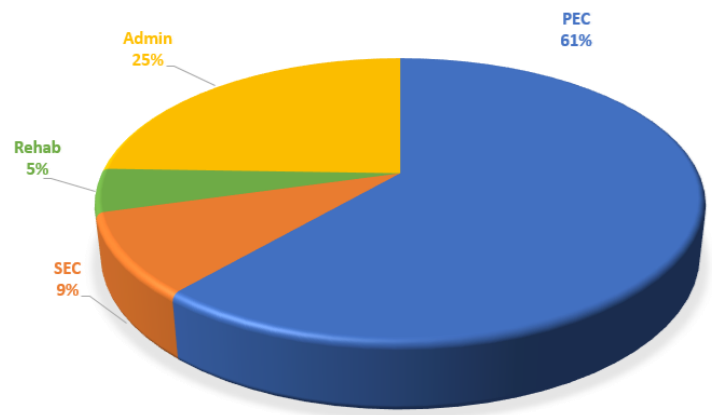
Juan records audiobooks with Yasser Musa

Financial Review

Income - BZ\$823,385



Expense - BZ\$1,086,597



**These charts do not reflect the LCIF Grant for the expansion of the Lions/BCVI Building in Belize City as that is being managed by the Belize City Lions.*

COVID-19 most certainly impacted our finances. Income was about \$800,000 less than in 2019 but with the clinics closing there was a \$600,000 decrease in expenses despite severances being paid. This was done using our fixed deposit which had been set aside for such an event. National Health Insurance (NHI) is usually ~ \$240,000 annually but was reduced significantly down to \$63,432. We are fortunate to have been able to continue the scholarships for our two Optometrists and one Ophthalmologist thanks to the Adarsh Charitable Foundation.

Planning for the Future

The last year has taught us about resilience and the importance of affordable and equitable services like BCVI's which exist to help those most in need. The economic impacts of COVID-19 have significantly affected our population. This is evident by the numbers of patients we have had to assist with glasses as people lost their jobs and National Health Insurance (NHI) was drastically reduced. We hope to have our full quota returned to us in the next contract period 2021—2022 as many patients have lost their sight due to avoidable issues such as Diabetic Retinopathy and Cataracts both of which are covered under NHI. However, without the visiting specialists, our Secondary Services have been on hold. We hope to resume surgical services once the Government of Belize and Ministry of Health approve international doctors practicing in Belize which is expected by mid 2021.

The Rehabilitation Programme continues to function virtually, providing support to clients, families and teachers using video and phone calls, with two members of staff. In 2021, we will hire a Rehabilitation Field Officer (RFO) in Belize City and provide training in Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) practices.

As we prepare to mark BCVI's 40th Anniversary in 2021, we look forward to fully resuming our comprehensive eye care services with continued COVID-19 prevention measures and a focus on providing care for all those in need.

Thank You!

BCVI acknowledges the following organisations, volunteers and friends for their much appreciated and continued support.

Ministry of Health
Ministry of Human Development
National Health Insurance (NHI)
Lions Clubs of Belize
Lions Club International Foundation (LCIF)
Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)
Adarsh Charitable Foundation
SEE International
Alcon
Help The World See
Mr & Mrs Said and Joan Musa
Dr David Boes
Rick Soller
Thomas Angell
Dr Paul Anthony
The BCVI Foundation
The Embassy of the Republic of Taiwan
Dr Baxter and Susan McLendon
Dr Inder Singal and Family
Dr Michael Wong
Dr Michael Banach
Dr Lennox Webb
Ayr Hospital Scotland
Dr Kinloch Nelson
Grace and Holy Trinity
Dr Millicent Peterseim
Storm Eye Institute
Anglican Diocese
Dr Sanjay Smith and Dr Janis Dezikalnn
The Image Factory Art Foundation
Yasser Musa
Gilvano Swasey
Musa & Balderamos
Lions Club of San Estevan
Lions Club of San Pedro
Belize Red Cross
Rotary Sunrise Belize
Selinsgrove Rotary Club & Toby Skinner



Lions Clubs International
FOUNDATION



Thank you!

BCVI Contact Information

Main Office and Administration
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Belize City
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Email: bcvibze@gmail.com

Primary and Secondary Eye Clinics
Eye examinations, prescribing and dispensing glasses, treatment and surgery
Lions Building
Princess Margaret Drive (next to KMH)
Belize City
Ph.: 501 223 2636

Rehabilitation and Education Services
Princess Margaret Drive
Belize City
Ph.: 501 610 5438

Regional Offices

Orange Walk & Corozal
Red Cross Building
Orange Walk Town
Ph.: 501 322 0227

Stann Creek
Southern Regional Hospital
Dangriga
Ph.: 501 522 0452

Toledo
BCVI Building
Punta Gorda Hospital
Ph.: 501 722 2025



BCVI