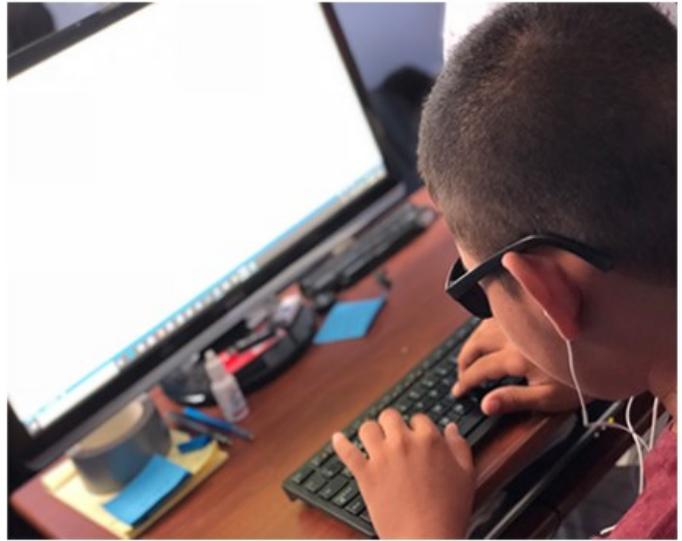
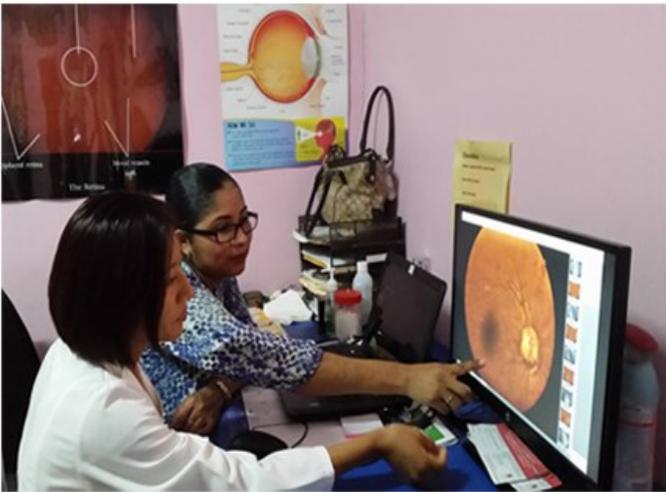


2018 Annual Report



**The Belize Council
for the Visually Impaired**

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:

National Eye Clinic
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 Executive President



BCVI has come a long way in the 37 years since its formation, as the first organization formed to assist people with visual impairment (VI).

For the first 10 years we concentrated on rehabilitation of adults and children who were blind. We built up an effective service based on a Community Based Rehabilitation approach. However, we found that many people with severe VI could be helped if their eye condition could be properly diagnosed. So in the following years we gradually introduced measures that would tackle the five major causes of blindness and low vision in Belize and the region. These diseases are Cataract, Glaucoma, Diabetic Retinopathy, Refractive Error and Childhood Blindness.

As we develop and grow so do our services and we have reached the stage where we have in-country treatment and diagnostic tests not previously available to address the most common conditions. We concentrate on the most cost-effective treatment that will benefit the most people at a price easily affordable. People may still have to travel abroad for tertiary eye care. However, this is the reality of a small developing country with limited resources with no type of medical training institutions beyond the level of nursing and technology programmes. This causes trained and qualified people to be in high demand and a major problem for staffing our six clinics, operating theatre and optical lab.

I should like to thank all the staff for their dedication and commitment to our goal of preventing avoidable blindness; our entry-level staff who are so willing to participate in on-the-job training so that they are in the position to recognize and not turn anybody away who is in urgent need. Also a big thanks to the optometrists who have stayed loyal to us after training abroad and to our lab technicians on whose experience we depend.

Thanks to the Board members and the many volunteers who help so many people.

Joan Musa

Executive President

From the Executive Director

Social Enterprise: An organization that applies commercial strategies to maximize improvements in human and environmental well-being, rather than maximizing profits for external shareholders. Social enterprises can be structured as a for-profit or non-profit, and may take the form of a co-operative, mutual organization, a social business, or a charity organization.

One of the most resounding recommendations for non-profit organizations today is the need to shift from external to internal funding—no longer relying solely on project grants but rather on generating our own income. This can be quite difficult for organizations that are viewed publicly as “free” services because of their non-profit status. However, this shift is crucial to the success of our organizations in the existing global economic climate.

More than 20 years ago, BCVI introduced our Primary and Secondary Eye Care Services to prevent and treat avoidable blindness. This foresight coupled with patient care as a core value of our services, has helped us find a harmonious balance between our non-profit status and income generation to keep our services alive. BCVI is the definition of a Social Enterprise.

The income generated from our fees for services allows us to subsidize the cost of glasses, surgery and medication for patients who are otherwise unable to afford treatment. BCVI is also able to offer our rehabilitation and education services completely free of cost for those who are blind!

At BCVI, we keep our patients at the center of our discussions and decisions to ensure that we do not lose sight of our vision: to serve Belizeans in need of eye care.

It goes without saying that the success of BCVI as a social enterprise is attributed to our hard-working, dedicated and compassionate staff, board members, founders, partners, volunteers and friends.

Thank you, for without you, hundreds of thousands of us would not have access to quality affordable eye care!



Carla Ayres Musa

Executive Director

Organisational Development

The Belize Council for the Visually Impaired is very proud of its growth over the years, from its establishment as a committee of the Red Cross in 1981, to becoming a registered NGO in 1988. BCVI went from being a charitable organisation, that depended on donations and fundraising in its infancy, to a robust NGO relying on international grants to what it has become today. It can now best be described as a Social Enterprise that provides quality eye care services for moderate fees. These fees cover not only all our running costs of eye care but any extra monies earned are spent on our rehabilitation and education services which is provided at no cost to the clients. Although remaining as an NGO we intend to ensure that any profits earned after covering our routine running costs are put back into developing the organisation whether through staff development, purchasing new equipment or improving our infrastructure.

In 2018:

- ◆ Dr Paul Anthony, long-time friend of BCVI, retired from his position as Treasurer of the BCVI Foundation in the USA. We are very grateful to him as a Founder along with Tom Angell who set up the Foundation and continues as its President. We welcome and thank Dr David Boes for taking up the position as the new treasurer. Dr Boes has been coming to BCVI as a cataract surgeon for the last ten years and we appreciate this extra help he is extending to BCVI.
- ◆ BCVI held its Annual General Meeting on July 20th at the Lions Den. A report of 2017 was shared with those in attendance and the parents and children of Summer Camp. Board Members were elected for the 2018-2019 period with one new member, Carlos Dominguez, a teacher with Ministry of Education in Orange Walk.
- ◆ Board meetings were held throughout the year with an emphasis on fundraising and building awareness.
- ◆ The Senior Management Team was restructured to adequately support the board and keep everybody up to date on the progress and happenings within BCVI. Regular staff meetings were also held for the various locations and departments. Mrs. Jackie Hemsley has been given an additional role as Lead People Manager due to long standing dedication to the organization and her diplomatic skills.
- ◆ We were fortunate to receive the services of Mr. Chad Miller, a volunteer chartered accountant through Accounting for International Development (Afid) a UK-based NGO. He worked on strengthening our financial management system and increasing income generation. He advised on getting web-based financial software to improve the overall financial management of the organization.
- ◆ As BCVI grows we have had to consider providing extra space for the increasing numbers of patients and staff. BCVI is working with a contractor to draw up a plan for additional space at our Belize City Main Office where we also conduct eye clinics and surgery. As this is in the Lions Building we will work with the local Lions chapter to submit a grant to the Lions International for partial funding.
- ◆ Dangriga's clinic has major construction issues and we will need to decide whether to renovate the building or if it will be more effective to replace the wooden structure. We will work on the most effective way forward on funding this urgent need.
- ◆ BCVI relocated its Belmopan Clinic from the Red Cross Building after a burglary of its offices, to a more central location in Market Square.

- ◆ We had a number of staff changes in 2018. We were saddened to lose the services of Liza Williams who was our senior and most experienced Rehabilitation Field Officer as she migrated with her family to the USA. To continue to provide rehabilitation and education support to students who are blind in Belize City and the District we hired Inga Sandoval who quickly fit in and got to know the students and continued the work. To assist with the running of this growing organization an Executive Assistant was hired and Karina Samuda has given valuable support to the Executive Director and Financial Officer. Sheena Castillo, BCVI Board Treasurer, joined the staff as Lab Operations Manager. Joining the technical lab staff are Shakeel Flowers and Eufemio Galindo as Lab technicians who under the guidance of senior technician, Rudy Cocom, produced an increased number of prescription glasses.

- ◆ We are grateful to the Cuban Brigade for their continued partnership in providing optometrist Eufemio Galindo whose knowledge and dedication at the Optical Lab is invaluable. As is the contribution of optometrist Arisel Mosqueda who has been examining patients at our southern clinics for the past three years. She will be greatly missed when her term is up at the beginning of 2019.

- ◆ BCVI attended the Cuban Medical Award Symposium presented to the Cuban Medical Brigade for 25 years of partnership with the Ministry of Health. Arisel Mosqueda, optometrist, presented on her experiences and Carla Musa, Executive Director also presented on BCVI's services.

- ◆ BCVI received a generous donation from Taiwan's Chou Ta-Kuan Foundation from the proceeds in sales of the Mandarin version of "Climb Walk Dive The Adventures of Rowan Garel". This donation will go directly to our Braille Production, as we have added an additional Rehabilitation Assistant, Arjenis Ruiz to our Braille production team.

- ◆ Our Executive Director successfully completed an NGO Management Certification Course through the University of the West Indies (UWI) via a scholarship from the Caribbean Policy Development Centre (CPDC) in partnership with the European Union (EU).

- ◆ OAs Randy Williams and Anna Salam returned from their three-months course in refraction from Aravind in India and resumed their posts in Toledo and Dangriga. Their roles have been expanded and will include screening and refracting in clinics and outreach. Lyn Garcia, Programme Director, will oversee their prescriptions and provide quality control. This will help increase the numbers of people being seen and strengthen our capacity.



Optometrist, Arisel Mosqueda, presenting at Cuban Symposium



Randy Williams receiving Certificate in Refraction from Aravind, India

Organisational Development (cont...)

- ◆ The National Health Insurance (NHI) contract was renewed with the addition of the Northern Region for a small quota of Diabetic Eye Exams and glasses. There has also been an improvement in our referral process through designating BCVI as a Primary Eye Care Provider.
- ◆ BCVI continues to be an active member of the Belize Network of NGOs that was formed in order to support the Senator representing Civil Society. We are one of only 40 out of 135 NGOs countrywide who are in good standing and eligible to vote for the Senator as we are up-to-date in submitting the required audit and annual reports.
- ◆ BCVI's Annual Staff trip was held on September 7th to Ayala's Natural Pools where the team enjoyed kayaking, zip lining, swimming and lunch. The staff enjoyed another get together at our annual end of year lunch at the Lions Den which included a review of 2018 and plans for 2019.



Elia Slusher, Ophthalmic Assistant, Orange Walk accepting a generous donation to our Rehabilitation Programme from a member of the San Estevan Lions Club.

Dr David Boes, Cataract Surgeon and new Treasurer of the USA BCVI Foundation with Karina Samuda, Executive Officer.



Rowan Garel visits BCVI, in the summer while on holiday, from Drew University in New Jersey USA. He came along with his mother Milagro Garel, a very active member of BCVI's Board.



The BCVI Team (Staff and Board Members)

Elections were held at our Annual General Meeting in July.

The Elected Board members 2017—2018 are:

EXECUTIVE BOARD

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

EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

Alice Riveroll
Regina Fonseca
Kamela Palma
Sharon Pollack
Carlos Dominguez

At the end of 2018 BCVI had a total of 41 staff to carry out all its activities.

ADMINISTRATION

Carla Ayres Musa - Executive Director
Leolyn Garcia - Programme Director
Mark Mitchell - Diabetic Retinopathy Programme Manager & IT Officer
Clifton Borland - Equipment Maintenance Officer
Carmencita Cruz - Finance Officer
Karina Samuda - Executive Officer
Carol Martinez - Custodian

REHABILITATION

Sagrario Clarke - Itinerant Teacher, Northern Districts
Inga Sandoval - RFO, Belize City and District
Elvia Sierra - RFO, Cayo and Southern Districts
Victor Chan - Rehabilitation Programme Assistant
Norma Rios - Rehabilitation Programme Assistant
Arjenis Ruiz - Rehabilitation Programme Assistant

OPTICAL LABORATORY

Sheena Castillo - Lab Manager
Merryl Hernandez - Lab Administrative Officer
Rudy Cocom - Senior Optical Technician
Eufemio Galindo - Optical Technician
Shakeel Flowers - Optical Technician

SECONDARY EYE CARE

Dr Zoraida Diaz - Ophthalmologist
Caroline Usher - Nurse in Charge
Nauget Buckley - Practical Nurse
Sagri Rodriguez - Administrative Officer
Mara Burgess - Ophthalmic Assistant

DIABETIC RETINOPATHY SCREENING

Lysette Pren- Screener/Grader, (Part-time)
Magali Sabido - Screener/Grader, Orange Walk & Corozal
Jahira Vasquez - Screener, Belize City

PRIMARY EYE CARE

Jackie Graham Hemsley - Primary Eye Care Manager
Elvia Bonilla - Optometrist, Belize City
Monique Lovell - Optometrist, Cayo
Rita Witzil - Optometrist, Orange Walk, Corozal, San Pedro
Arisel Mosqueda - Optometrist, South

Anna Salam - Screener/Refractionist, Stann Creek
Randolph Williams - Refractionist, Toledo

Kimberly Flowers - Ophthalmic Assistant, Belize City
Michelle Young - Ophthalmic Assistant, Belize City
Elia Slusher - Ophthalmic Assistant, Orange Walk
Daniel Choc - Ophthalmic Assistant, Toledo
Celia Flores - Ophthalmic Assistant, Cayo



Primary Eye Care

The Belize Council for the Visually Impaired is the only public eye care provider in the country. We aim to prevent blindness by offering free eye tests to all who seek our help. These tests are available at our five Primary Eye Care Clinics strategically located throughout the country and through our many outreach activities. This examination includes a refraction test to check if the vision will improve with glasses. The clinics are supported by an optical lab that makes up the glasses that are dispensed back to the patient at their local clinic.

In 2018, a total of 1,034 clinics were held and 15,128 people were examined at the primary level where 4,686 prescription glasses and 1,958 reading glasses were dispensed

Total Population of Belize - 387,870



Orange Walk, Corozal and San Pedro

People examined	3,297
Prescription glasses	700
Total Population	98,405

Belize

People examined	5,341
Prescription glasses	2,283
Total Population	117,196

Cayo

People examined	1,348
Prescription glasses	477
Total Population	93,352

Stann Creek

People examined	3,294
Prescription glasses	833
Total Population	42,230

Toledo

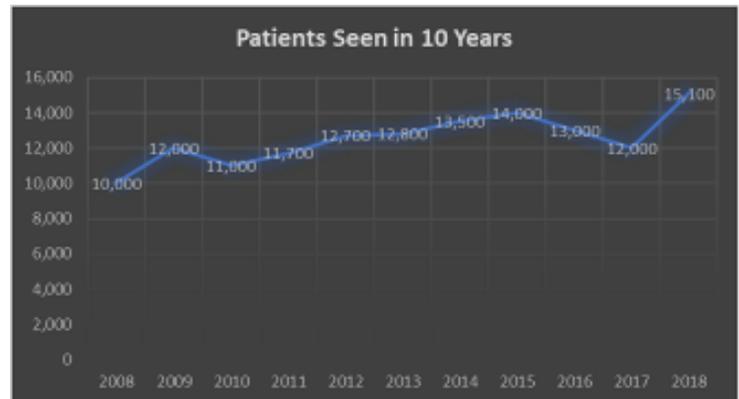
People examined	1,848
Prescription glasses	393
Total Population	63,695

Of the total 15,128 people who were examined:

Children – 2,736	Adults – 12,392
Female – 9,404	Male – 5,724

Primary Eye Care

BCVI continues to grow and reach out to more people each year. In 2018 we examined more than 3,000 people than we did in 2017 and over the last five years a total of 5,000 more people has been examined on an annual basis, as illustrated in the chart.



Staff Development

In addition to an increase in the number of patients seen, we are also happy to report that Programme Director Lyn Garcia and Primary Eye Care Manager, Mrs Jackie Hemsley, have been providing ongoing training for the Ophthalmic Assistants and Optometrists throughout the year. These trainings took place in groups and on an individual basis in the clinics and aimed to improve the referrals from PEC to SEC as well as increase the quality of services and management in all the clinics. All our referrals are generated through the patients' records entered on the Belize Health Information System (BHIS). The BHIS continues to be updated by Mark Mitchell, IT Officer, to improve the inclusion of all patients on lists for the appropriate visiting specialist.



A group training session for optometrists and ophthalmic assistants conducted by Leolyn Garcia.

Joan Musa and Jackie Hemsley have organized the Training Package for OAs based on the Knowledge Skills and Attitude Assessment Tool. This will ensure uniformity in training and assessing the training needs of new and existing team members.

Carla Ayres Musa, Executive Director, attended a Webinar hosted by the IAPB and WHO which focused on the Primary Eye Care Training Manual developed by Dr Chiku Mathenge for health professionals in Africa to be able to provide basic eye care. This document has already been very helpful in strengthening BCVI's Primary Eye Care training for Ophthalmic Assistants and other BCVI team members.

With the shortage of optometrists, we appreciate their willingness to move around and provide coverage where necessary. We also appreciate the foresight of our Programme Director in training Randy and Anna to a standard where they could participate in the Refraction Certification at Aravind, India and ensure coverage at our southern clinics.



Optometrist Elvia Bonilla, works at our busiest clinic in Belize City.

Primary Eye Care

Outreach Clinics

In addition to BCVI's regular base clinics we also try to take eye care nearer to the patient's home by conducting outreach clinics. The Orange Walk team hold monthly clinics in Corozal and San Pedro conducted by optometrist Rita Witzil that are well received by those communities.

For the first time in years, BCVI staff conducted a two-day clinic in Caye Caulker during which 79 people were examined and glasses were dispensed. Monthly clinics continue in San Pedro and we plan to visit Caye Caulker again.

- ◆ We always welcome groups who approach us to supplement our services and are grateful when they are willing to work in the more remote areas:

Five outreach clinics were conducted at various schools in the Cayo district through the efforts of BCVI and Grace and Holy Trinity Church and Dr Kinloch Nelson. Pre-screenings were done by members of the volunteer group and students with low visual acuity were referred to the BCVI's optometrist. Refractions were conducted on all referred students. Over 900 students were screened and 56 received glasses thanks to the donation from the group.

- ◆ Defiance College students led by Mary Ann Studer and Rena Rager conducted screening in Orange Walk on close to 1000 children using a handheld autorefractor.
- ◆ Amigos/VOSH Pacific University – The group of volunteer Optometrists and students visited the Belize District where they conducted clinics in Crooked Tree, Maskall, Burrell Boom and Ladyville. They saw 230 persons offering free eye screening, medication and reading glasses; and 67 patients were referred.
- ◆ The Toledo staff held a mass screening for diabetics in the community. The turnout was good, but we intend to target different areas in the district for routine screenings. They also continued their screening of school children.
- ◆ BCVI continues to partner with the National Health Insurance (NHI) and a new area was officially implemented in Corozal. BCVI's Orange Walk Clinic will provide the eye care through its monthly visits to Corozal with services open to registered patients needing eye glasses and exams for diabetic retinopathy. Training in the use of the NHI RAWA system as well as reporting was provided by Sagri and Mark.



Students benefiting from the screening in Cayo



Daniel Choc, OA, vision screening at a school in Crique Sarco, Toledo

Diabetic Retinopathy Programme

As the funding for the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust comes to an end, we are gradually incorporating the screening for DR into our Primary Care Services. However, 2018 was very busy with training of staff and sensitization of patients with diabetes. In 2018 a total of 1319 patients with Diabetes were screened, with 76 new patients referred to the Ophthalmologist for Diabetic Retinopathy and 212 patients (old and new) received laser treatment.

In December 2017 Pippa Williams and Chloe Cornes visited BCVI via the LSTHM LINKS programme during which they worked along with our IT officer, DR graders and Programme Director. In January 2018, the screener graders completed their training and exam and were awarded University Certificates in Grading for Diabetic Retinopathy Screening.

Dr Inder Singal continues to be of great assistance to this programme by seeing hundreds of referred patients each year and treating those who need laser. He very kindly donated a handheld retinal camera and the OW team came for training in its use in Belize City with Mark Mitchell. Screening forms were developed and Optometrist Rita Witzil is piloting the device in the Corozal's Diabetic Clinic during her monthly visits.

In November, BCVI along with the Ministry of Health and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine conducted health education sessions on Diabetic Retinopathy with the four regions and their managers. Health professionals in each region were invited to attend the talks by Diabetologist Andy Smith, Ophthalmologist Baxter McLendon and Ministry of Health personnel.

Dr Lucy Howe worked with BCVI Ophthalmologist, Dr Zoraida Diaz, to enhance her skills in providing laser treatment. This was the final session in her training. It was recommended and decided that as Dr Diaz is the only ophthalmologist examining patients, we will continue to refer laser treatment able to wait, until Dr Singal or other retinal specialists visit.

As part of the closing tour for the Regional Diabetic Retinopathy Project funded by the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust, CEO of the Trust, Dr Astrid Bonfield, travelled to Belmopan, Belize to meet with the Ministry of Health and BCVI personnel responsible for the DR Programme in Belize.

Optometrist Rita Witzil and Screener/ Grader Magali Sabido grade retinal images at the Orange Walk clinic.



Treating Eye Diseases

All patients needing specialist eye treatment have already been screened by our optometrists and ophthalmic assistants throughout the country and the patient has a potential diagnosis.

This enables Dr Zoraida Diaz, our on-staff ophthalmologist, and our visiting specialists to make the best use of their time and expertise. In 2018, Dr Diaz made a total of 3,307 examinations on 2,023 patients and referred on those needing to see our visiting specialists, whether to cataract surgeons, retinologists, paediatric specialists and for the first time this year an oculoplastic surgeon. Many of these specialties are not available in country so it is very satisfying to see our repertoire at home increasing.*

We are incorporating the treatment of Diabetic Retinopathy into our general eye care programme as we come to the end of two projects that addressed this blinding condition. We note that in addition to all the work Dr Singal has done in 2018 treating this disease, Dr Diaz examined 667 and performed laser treatments on 60 people.

The OCT Machine is proving very helpful particularly in monitoring patients with retinal problems and glaucoma. However, at the end of the year the machine developed a problem. We will continue to make every effort to get this fixed as it was a brand new piece of advanced equipment.

Training was also given by the Programme Director to PEC and SEC staff to improve data entry, reporting and referrals as well as increase the quality of services in the clinics. Glaucoma Screening training was conducted and Glaucoma Sessions are now held weekly at SEC by the Nurses using newly-donated equipment from Dr Boes and Dr McLendon.

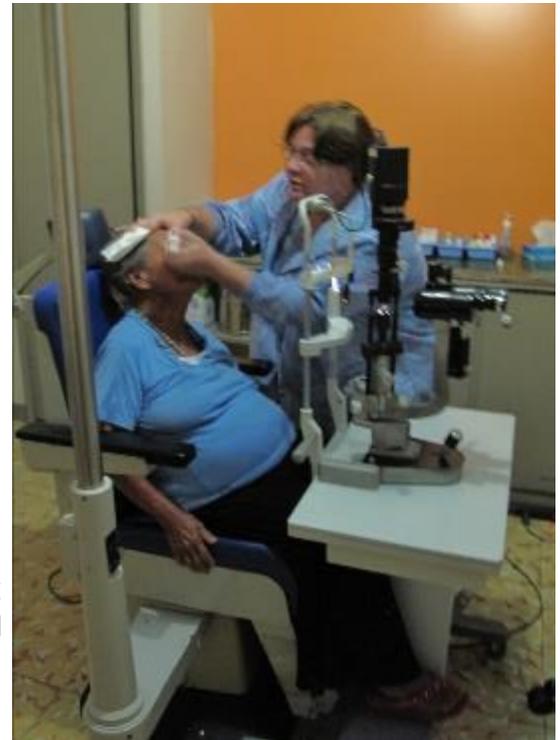
Joan Musa and Carla Ayres Musa met with the new CEO of the KMH, Ms. Michelle Hoare, and administrators to discuss the emergency situation. This meeting was prompted by four emergency eye cases in one month which were operated on by Dr Boes (1) and Dr David Hoy (3). KMH will discuss possible solutions and will inform BCVI.

Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP)

ROP continues to be a concern and Dra Diaz examined 62 babies in the KMH NICU; 9 babies who showed signs of ROP were monitored for any development of the disease. In 2018, three new babies were referred to the Rehabilitation Programme.

A meeting was held with the Maternal and Child Health Director Dr Natalia Beer and Director of KMH to discuss the prevention of ROP. Pediatric Ophthalmologist Dr Millicent Peterseim will visit in February 2019 to provide support to the KMH and BCVI in ROP Prevention .

*See pages 20 and 21 - for the specific work of our visitors and volunteers



Dr Zoraida Diaz examines a patient

It is over 10 years that Dr David Boes and Nurse Nancy Mayernik have been coming to Belize, and BCVI appreciates the donation of their time and skills. They have visited at least twice a year and have restored the vision of many grateful patients through countless cataract surgeries.

The collage below shows Dr Boes operating on former Prime Minister of Belize, Rt Hon. Said Musa who said after his surgery,

My cataract surgery at BCVI went extremely well! No pain. No discomfort! A walk in the park!

The visiting specialist Dr. David Boes who attended to me was very professional and obviously knew his stuff! The assisting staff at BCVI were all wonderfully pleasant and courteous!

Thank you BCVI for the great work you do for the thousands of visually impaired Belizeans especially for those poor people who receive the services of BCVI!

The service is first class! I can see clearly now!



We should also like to make special mention of the valuable service given to BCVI and our patients, for over 15 years, by Nurse Caroline Usher. Nurse Usher, a trained theatre nurse, is seconded to us under our agreement with the Ministry of Health and is in charge of managing all the clinical support activities of the SEC, BCVI's main referral and treatment centre. Thank you Nurse Usher for your calm, caring manner when dealing with both staff and patients.



Nurse Usher assisting in the operating theatre and testing intra ocular pressure (IOP)

Rehabilitation

BCVI's Rehabilitation Programme for adults and children who are blind was introduced on its formation in 1981. It was our only service at the beginning and it has seen many changes in both people needing our assistance to adjust to their blindness and those providing it. At first we concentrated on helping people who had lost their sight in later years by providing home visits and a visually impaired club for elderly blind people. However, in the last 15 years we have seen a shift in the need to a growing number of blind children who have needed support and direction since infancy. Children have always been a priority. In cases of adults who are newly blind, we concentrate on counselling, adapting and networking with other organisations.

We have also seen staff changes as Liza Zelaya, our Senior Rehabilitation Field Officer (RFO), left to join her family in the USA. Liza provided orientation and some training to her replacement Inga Sandoval. However, we see the need for more specialized training that is, unfortunately, not available in country. BCVI is in discussions with Canadian-based organization APSEA to provide training for BCVI's RFOs in everything from Braille to Daily Living Skills. We hope to finalize this plan in January. Elvia Sierra is also taking Primary School Teacher training to be able to better assist in the classroom.



Liza's Farewell from her BCVI Family

Programme Highlights of 2018

- ◆ Victor Chan and Jackie Hemsley attended the Leo Bradley Library "Doorstep Tales" where they presented on care of the eyes to over 75 children ages 6-13. BCVI was well received as we explained about the services we offer. They read Rowan Gare's journey "Climb, Walk, Dive". We explained and demonstrated how a blind person can learn to read and function independently.
- ◆ We were deeply saddened by the passing of student Alex Sharp who had been diagnosed with Marfan Syndrome (last year) and had a poor prognosis. Nevertheless, Alex continued to work toward his dream of going to 6th Form. He was an inspiration to us having overcome his depression during his gradual sight loss.
- ◆ Joan Musa, Inga Sandoval (Bze RFO) and Sagrario Clarke attended the workshop for the Ability Institute at St John's College which included an exhibition promoting inclusion especially in education. Juan Reina, the first blind student to attend SJC, addressed the audience with an inspiring speech about his experience being a student who is blind.



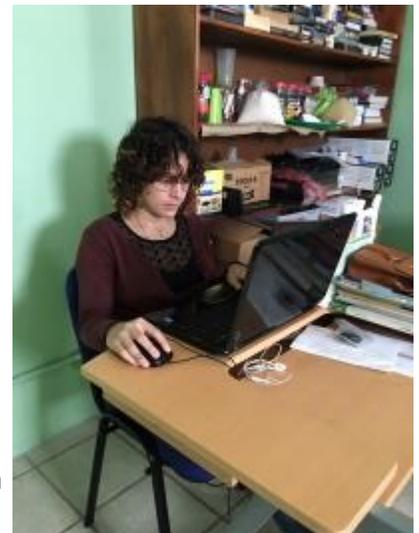
Juan Reina speaking at Ability Institute

Education for All

With a total of 50 children requiring early stimulation and support in mainstream schools, our RFOs have a challenging task. Training of our RFOs was continued throughout the year with Mrs. Sagrario Clarke providing some training in writing Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and teaching notes. Strategies on how to prepare children for reading was also addressed. In addition “Back to School” teacher training for the classroom teacher was provided by BCVI.

Inga Sandoval and Mrs. Clarke attended the Early Childhood Development (ECD) Workshop with UNICEF where discussions were held on issues, gaps, challenges and actions required for the monitoring of ECD Data Management system in Belize. Human Resources were highlighted unanimously as the key to improving services.

Joan Musa and Carla Ayres Musa met with the Rehab Team to discuss several concerns about the programme including training needs and difficulty with working with children in school. The production of books and documents for students has increased, forcing us to restructure the process. With the addition of a new assistant, Arjenis Ruiz, we have greatly improved the efficiency of the book production and enhanced this service. All Book Production is now being done by the Rehab Assistants, from scanning to editing to embossing. The assistants are also communicating with teachers in the Belize District to assist Inga (Belize RFO) with receiving and distributing materials. Flash drives (as opposed to email) are now being used for students with laptops to ensure internet connection does not pose a problem for them to access their school materials.



Norma Rios, Rehabilitation Assistant, editing books

Book Production Unit

In 2018 BCVI produced and catalogued:

- 50 Books were scanned and edited, of these:
- 4 Embossed as Braille books and
- 46 Books to be used with NVDA (speech software for the computer)
- 83 Braille books were donated



Introducing Araceli Ricalde

Araceli Ricalde is from the beautiful village of Calcutta in the Corozal District. Her family recently relocated to Santa Elena, Cayo and she is now attending the Seventh Day Adventist

Primary school in Santa Elena Town. Araceli is ten years old and is a very smart girl. She is in standard IV and enjoys school. At the start of this school year, mom decided to sit in class with her, but Araceli was confident enough to stay at school on her own and asked mom to stay at home. That is typical of Araceli as she is a very confident child and is always participating in class. Her teacher, Mrs. Gabourel, has no doubt Araceli will reach very far in life. Araceli even participated in the spelling bee and made it to the elimination round. She has also been baptized this year and is a very devoted Christian. Her parents and school are so proud of Araceli and they make her feel loved and welcomed.

Highlights of Summer Camp 2018

This year the camp was held for only one week. Although successful and all activities were included, it was unanimously agreed that next year we would be back to two weeks.

Activities included:



ART & CRAFTS



COMPUTER PRACTICE



DAY TRIPS & MATH CLASSES



For the last few years we have held our AGM during summer camp so that friends, family and staff can meet up. It shows the true impact that the organisation can make on the lives of the children and their families.

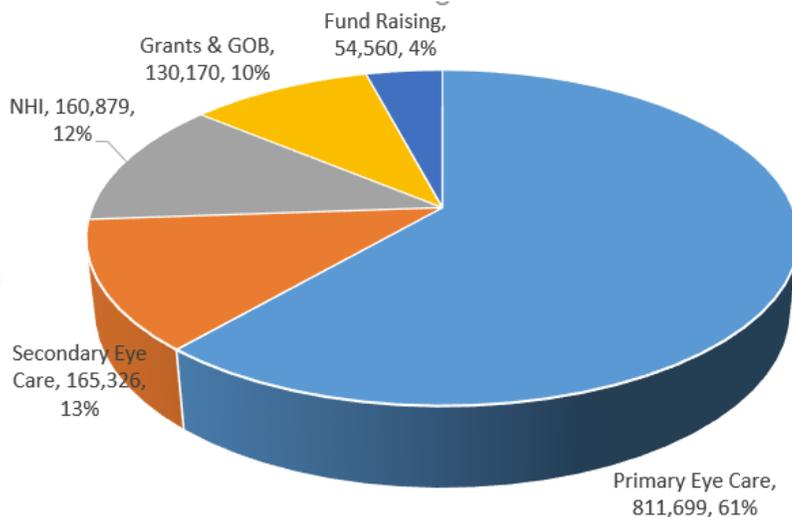
A highlight of the AGM was the singing of the National Anthem by the children at Summer Camp.



2018 Financial Review

Total Income \$1,322,634

Not including in kind contributions



BCVI continues to grow by assisting more patients, improving services, attracting more specialists and developing more services. Although our income has shown steady growth over the years, this year we had a **Net Loss of \$186,776** as our income failed to keep up with our expenditure. This is an overall reflection of the economic situation in the country as the general economy contracts and there is high unemployment and an inadequate safety net.

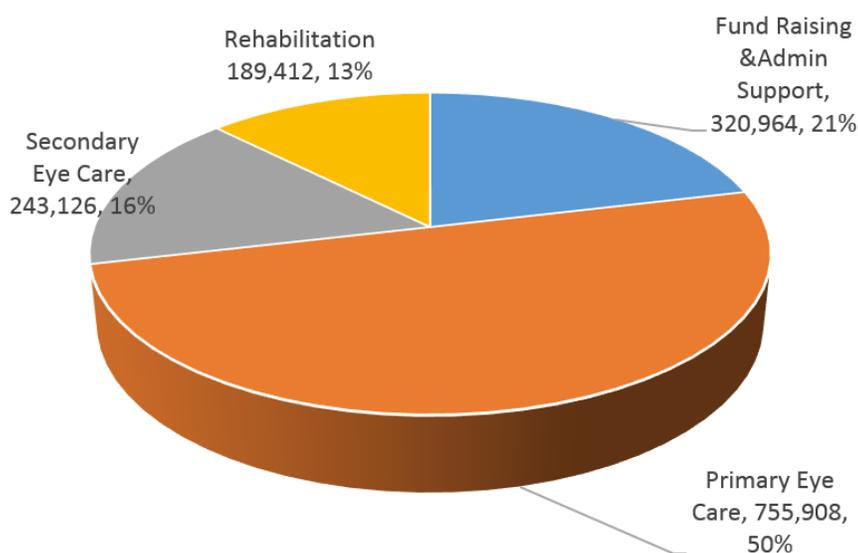
Unfortunately much of the work that is done by BCVI should be supported by the Ministry of Health and in the past this has been supplemented by International Project Grants. However, in 2018 these two line items only contributed to 13% of our total income.

We now describe ourselves as a social enterprise as we have to run as a business and any profits are put back to developing the organisation. We will therefore have to monitor our financial situation carefully and cut down on expenditure without compromising the quality of our services.

We shall also review the prices on the glasses we produce and sell as this is our largest income earner. If we do make small increases we will still be significantly lower in price than the private sector. BCVI will continue our social assistance programme to help those in dire need.

Total Expenditure \$1,509,410

Not including capital expenditure



Visitors and Volunteers

Ophthalmologists

Dr Katherine Johnson, Ophthalmologist, made her first ever visit in January during which she held clinics for Cataract, Retina & Oculoplastics, at the SEC, Belize City. She examined 54 patients; performed 6 cataract surgeries; laser on 16 patients and has expressed an interest in making return visits.

Dr Baxter McLendon, Ophthalmologist, visited four times and provided Exams, Laser and Surgery, Countrywide. He examined close to 500 patients throughout the year at the SEC and District Clinics; provided laser treatments to more than 30 patients countrywide with retinal or glaucoma problems; and did more than 50 pterygium surgeries and other procedures. He was also actively involved in the series of National Diabetic Retinopathy Sessions, organized in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and London School of Health Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Dr Inder Singal, Retinal Specialist, visited three times in 2018 and during each visit he held clinics in Belize City, Orange Walk and Dangriga. Dr Singal examined a total of 466 people at the three locations during his three visits. In addition he provided 349 laser treatments for 200 patients. We heartily thank Dr Singal for his years of hard work and dedication in seeing and treating such a high number of people threatened with blindness.

Dr David Boes & Team visited twice in 2018 to do cataract surgery at the SEC Belize City. He examined a total of 114 patients and performed 77 phaco surgeries including an emergency surgery for a young girl with an injury. BCVI and their patients are thankful to Dr Boes and Nancy for such well-organized and fruitful sessions that contribute to restoring vision.

Dr Matt Nutaitis & Resident Laura Conrad from Storm Eye Institute worked at the SEC, Belize City from March 18th - 24th. They examined 26 patients, including those with Glaucoma, and conducted educational sessions with Dra Diaz. The team also performed 12 cataract surgeries.

Dr Chuck Beischel & Resident, Storm Eye Institute worked at the SEC April 2nd - 6th during which they examined 10 patients; performed 9 cataract surgeries.

Dr John Ghobrial made his first visit to work with BCVI at the SEC, from April 30th - May 4th. He examined 31 patients and performed 15 cataract surgeries. He has expressed an interest in returning.

Dr Thomas Dilip, Oculoplastic surgeon worked at the SEC from May 17th - 19th. He examined 40 patients and performed 13 oculoplastic operations. This is the first time BCVI has had any oculoplastic surgeon visiting and we look forward to further assistance in this area in the future.

Dr Millicent Peterseim & the World Pediatric Project (WPP) Team provided ophthalmological care for children from June 24th - 30th at the SEC. A total of 139 children were examined and 14 surgeries and procedures were carried out including strabismus surgeries.

Dr Edgar Ogaldes, assisted by Dr. Baxter McLendon worked at the SEC from September 14th - 16th. He examined 142 patients and did a record 87 cataract surgeries in two days. While this was a very successful visit, we will plan less surgeries on his next visit as the team worked until late into the night.



Dr Inder Singal examining a patient

A team from the Far Eastern Memorial Hospital (FEMH) in Taiwan worked at SEC, Belize City September 24th - 28th. Dr Huang and her nurse assistant examined 53 patients and performed 11 cataract surgeries.

Optometrists and Screening Groups

Dr Kinloch Nelson and a team from Grace and Holy Trinity Church, USA made their annual visit from February 20th – 22th

They did vision Screening and Refractions in schools in the Cayo District with the Belmopan BCVI Team. More than 900 students were screened and 56 children were provided with glasses by BCVI's Optical Lab and funded by the visiting team.

VOSH Pacific University, Optometry Student Group Mission visited August 12th - 19th

They worked in the Belize District and screened 230 persons and dispensed medication and reading glasses. 67 persons were referred to our base clinic for Diabetic Retinopathy, Glaucoma, Cataract, Pterygium and high refractive error evaluations.

Rena Rager and Mary Studder and a group of students from Defiance College, USA visited in December 2nd - 15th

As part of their annual voluntary work in the Orange Walk District, the Defiance team screened more than 1,000 students at La Inmaculada School in Orange Walk. The students needing refractions and further assistance were referred to BCVI's Orange Walk team.

Other Visitors and volunteers

Glenn Lashley, Equipment Maintenance Engineer visited from October 1st - 4th

Glenn along with Clifton and Baxter visited all clinics to address concerns regarding equipment and building maintenance. Many essential pieces of equipment were maintained and/or repaired including the surgical microscope and Yag laser .

Chad Miller, Accountant for International Development (AFID) Volunteered April 21st - May 31st

He made assessments and recommendations of the Financial Management System of BCVI. He made recommendations on how to increase the efficiency of the overall financial management and how to strengthen the income generation of the Lab. He advised it would be more efficient to use Web-based software and this will be implemented to link all clinics to the general management system.

Benedickt Van Der Boom visited from December 3rd - 6th from a German Organization for the Blind

He met with the Director, President and Rehab Team to learn more about BCVI's services for the blind. He was impressed with the support BCVI provides which he witnessed when he visited children in school as well as a newly blind patient.

Thank you!

Planning for the Future



We look forward to 2019 with great hope for all our programme areas. As with any planning for the future, we shall look at ways of increasing our sustainability and effectiveness in the main areas of our work. We shall focus on making the best possible utilization of the organization's resources and a better accounting of their use. This includes: our staff, our locations, the equipment and supplies as well as the finances available to run the organisation.

Our Human Resources: the staff and volunteers who provide the services to our patients. We are fortunate to have an ophthalmologist on staff at our main clinic and she is supported by specialists who come in to do cataract surgery, glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy treatment, to whom she can refer her patients for more advanced treatment. We are reaching out to more doctors and even exploring opportunities for a general doctor to study ophthalmology.

We shall continue training our ophthalmic assistants (OAs) to be more effective and look at opportunities for those interested in further studies for becoming refractionists and optometrists so that all our clinics can be fully staffed. We also have a number of volunteer optometrists interested in joining our staff for longer periods, even up to a year.

Working with the Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital (KMH) and their NICU we will look at improving the response and options for babies who are at high risk for developing Retinopathy of Prematurity. Through our link with Storm Eye Institute, Dr Millicent Peterseim will organise a visit from Dr. Rick Saunders, specialist in treatment of ROP who will work with Dr Diaz to introduce the option of anti-VEGF injection that has proved very effective in the USA. We have reached an agreement that KMH will contract ophthalmologists in private practice to deal with all emergencies but BCVI will continue to assist in diagnosis and non surgical treatment during clinic hours.

The Rehabilitation staff will receive a formal training course from Sheila Jamieson, a trainer of teachers for the blind at the Canadian organisation APSEA. This will be an interactive, online course that will cover all the basics of a rehabilitation service. Sheila hopes to follow this up with a visit in 2020 to continue some one-on-one training.

Our largest programme area is Primary Eye Care and the income we make from the sale of glasses sustains us in our day to day recurrent costs across all programme areas. It is therefore vital that constant attention is paid to our patients' needs so that we keep our reputation for quality service at an affordable price. As most of the workforce would prefer progressive lenses, we shall be introducing this option in 2019. Presently we are turning these people away who would be quite happy to purchase from BCVI. We are working with Help the World See for training and the additional lens supply we will need.

We are hoping to expand our main headquarters in Belize City to enlarge our PEC clinic waiting and dispensing area and to add a multi purpose Rehabilitation Centre. As this building belongs to the Belize City Lions Club, we will work with them to put together a proposal that will address the improvement of our Rehabilitation Service. Our other infrastructure project for next year is to replace BCVI's Building in Dangriga as the present one is in a deplorable state. We will look to purchase a prefabricated structure to place in the same location next to the Southern Regional Hospital.

In 2019, we look forward to strengthening our mission of preventing blindness and rehabilitating people who are blind to become independent.

Thank You!

BCVI acknowledges the following persons and organisations for their much appreciated and continued support.

Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)
Ministry of Health
Ministry of Human Development
National Health Insurance (NHI)
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Lions Club International Foundation (LCIF)
The Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust
Embassy of the Republic of China on Taiwan
Chou Ta-Kuan Foundation Taiwan
SEE International
Alcon
AFID
Dr David Boes
Rick Soller
Thomas Angell
Dr Paul Anthony
The BCVI Foundation
Dr Baxter and Susan McLendon
Charleston Ophthalmological Society
Dr Glen Lashley
Rick Martin
Dr Lennox Webb
Dr Kinloch Nelson and Grace and Holy Trinity
Atlantic Bank Ltd.
Atlantic International Bank
World Paediatric Project
Mac Humphries & Restoring Vision
The Moorings
The Image Factory Foundation
Musa & Balderamos
San Estevan Lions Club
OAK Foundation
Stella Maris School
Dr Kalim and Gigi Habet
Dr Inder Singal and Family
Amigos VOSH Pacific University
Rowan Garel and the Garel Family
Fabrigas Belize Ltd.
Bradley's Import
James Brodie & Co. Ltd
McNab Visual
Sol Belize Limited



Lions Clubs International
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Tropic Air
Quality Poultry
Bowen & Bowen
Madisco
Caribbean Chicken Belize and Orange Walk
La Popular Bakery Belize and OW
Premier Charter & Tours
Matthew Castillo
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Chad Miller
Joseph & Taylor
Crossroad Farm Supplies

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