

# **Creating Research Capacity in Developing Countries The Role of International Collaborative Networks of Information Professionals**

**Sudha Risal Sharma, Lumbini Eye Institute, Nepal**

**P. Kirubanithi, Aravind Eye Institute, India**

**Pamela C. Sieving, National Institutes of Health, USA**

**Bette Anton, University of California, Berkeley, USA**

**Catherine Howett, University of British Columbia, Canada**

# Summary

- Partners in vision care, education & research:
  - Resource Centres (RCs) supporting Community Centres of Ophthalmology (CCOs)
  - AVSL, an international network of vision librarians
  - Not-for-profit agencies: SEVA, Lavelle Fund
  - For-profit agencies: Google
- Working in cooperation with Vision 2020 to build health capacity in developing countries

# Background: Problems & Players

# The Problem

- More than 300 million in world visually impaired (270 with low vision; 45 million blind) [1]
- Blindness is an important barrier to development
- 90% of blind live in low-income countries
- 80% of all blindness can be prevented or cured [1]





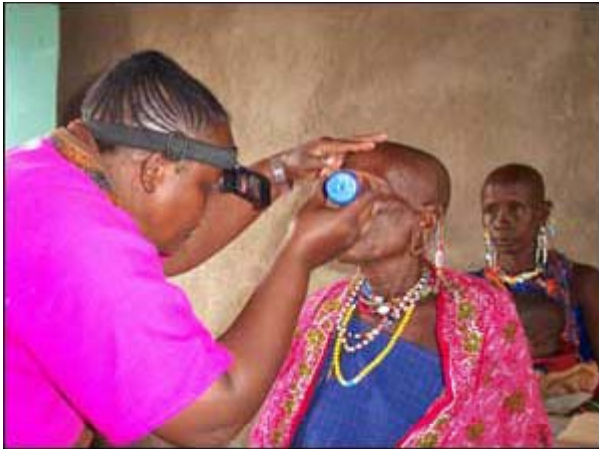
# The Players



## Vision 2020: The Right to Sight

- Initiative by WHO and more than 20 international nongovernmental organizations
- Aim is to prevent 100 million from becoming blind by the year 2020.
- SEVA Foundation
  - Mission to alleviate suffering caused by disease & poverty
  - CCOs are one of current projects

# Community Centers for Ophthalmology



**Kilimanjaro Center for  
Community Ophthalmology**

Photo source: <http://www.seva.org/tanzania.php>



# Association of Vision Science Librarians (AVSL)

AVSL [www.avsl.org](http://www.avsl.org) is:

- An international organization
  - Over 130 members in 26 countries
  - Members communicate 24/7 via listserv
  - Supports resource sharing and collegial assistance

<http://www.avsl.org/>

- Private companies
- Professional associations
- Other vision-related organizations



Members at Meetings



ICML 2009





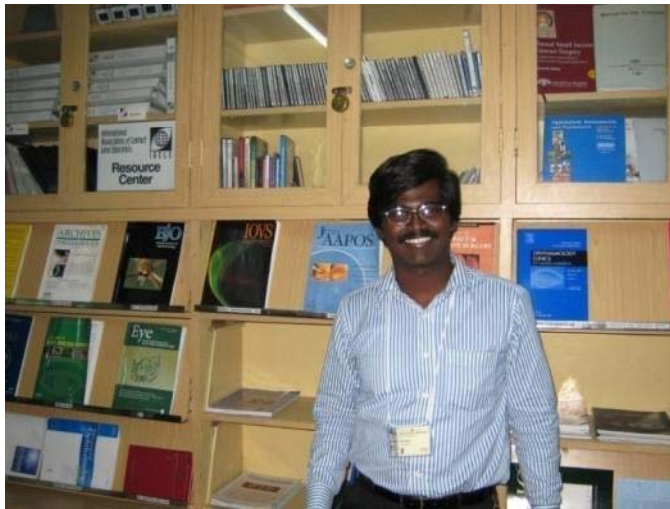
# Action: The iconnect Workshops

# iconnect 2007



Lions Aravind Institute of Community Ophthalmology (LAICO)  
Madurai, India  
March, 2007

# LAICO Library: A Model Resource Centre



- Support to user community, including satellite hospitals:
  - Aids in set-up of local digital libraries
  - Conducts Continuing Education
- Provides 6 month internships for new information professionals
- Digitizes local information, to promote sharing



# Workshop Goals

- To plan and lay the foundation for the development and maintenance of information resource centers at “Community Centres for Ophthalmology” in developing countries (India, Nepal, Tanzania, Guatemala and Egypt).
- To build a community of Resource Center professionals

# Working Session iconnect 2007



Out of iconnect 2007:

Recognition of importance of

- Community
- Collection
- Connection

# iconnect 2008



Lumbini Eye Institute (LEI)  
Siddharthanagar, Nepal  
February, 2008

# LEI Library: A Success Story

- LEI established 1983
- Library
  - From one bookshelf to full-fledged unit of LEI
- Successes:
  - HINARI and INASP access
  - Membership in AVSL = improved access to international journals
  - Networking has materially improved quality of research
- Challenges remain





# National Workshop on Vision Science Resource Centre Collaboration

- Funded with small grant from the INASP
- Primary aim:
  - To bring together vision science librarians of Nepal
  - To share current practices & to develop & expand the iconnect network of librarians
  - Expand interlibrary sharing of information and knowledge of online resources





ICML 2009



Ultimate goal of workshops:

To participate in the reduction of blindness  
through improved access to learning resources  
and management tools

# Continuing Challenges

- Meager access to information resources, for many reasons, including costs
- Lack of trained staff
- Lack of awareness of resources, including OA, HINARI
- Infrastructure problems

# Successes

- AVSL has many new members,
- Exchange program is strong
- Expertise is shared widely
- Mentorship relationships have developed
- Grant funding is being explored

Librarians themselves are key to the knowledge infrastructure that will help make the goals of Vision 2020 a reality.



**Photo sources:**

[http://aravind.org/downloads/Aravindnewsapr06/images/smiling\\_child.gif](http://aravind.org/downloads/Aravindnewsapr06/images/smiling_child.gif) &  
<http://www.seva.org/aboutseva.php>



We believe our future is so bright, we need shades!



Thank you!  
[www.avsl.org](http://www.avsl.org)



Pam Sieving, pamsieving@nih.gov

Bette Anton, banton@library.berkeley.edu

Sudha Sharma Risal, srasehlibrary@yahoo.com

P. Kirubanithi, laico\_library@aravind.org

Catherine Howett, ahowett@interchange.ubc.ca



# References

1. Vision 2020. Blindness and Visual Impairment: Global Facts. <http://www.v2020.org/page.asp?section=000100010036> Accessed June 15, 2009.
2. World Bank. Gross national income per capita 2007, atlas method and PPP. <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DATASTATISTICS/Resources/GNIPC.pdf>. Accessed June 15, 2009.
3. Mathers C, vos T, Stephenson C. Burden of Disease and Injury in Australia. AIHW Catalog No. PHE-17, 1999. Available at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/5180>. Accessed June 15, 2009.
4. Lewallen S, Courtright P. Cataract surgical coverage remains lower in females. British Journal of Ophthalmology 2009; 93:295-8.
5. Pakenham-Walsh N, Bukachi F. Information needs of health care workers in developing countries: a literature review with a focus on Africa. Human Resources for Health 2009; 7:30. Available in PubMed Central.