

# Annual Report

2013



Resources for the Blind, Inc.



# FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ...

Dear Friends,

The picture below is of a woman in Iloilo, Jocelyn, with her blind granddaughter, Sarah Claire, who has been left in her care. The one thing that is very clear is that Jocelyn loves her granddaughter. Although she has no skills or training on how to raise a child who is blind, Sarah is safe in her arms.

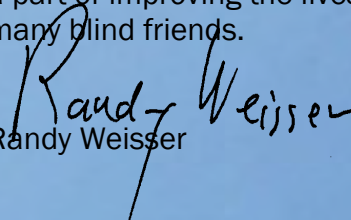


Our calling at RBI is to find families like this, and give them the hope, encouragement and skills they need to help their children reach the fullest potential in life and ministry that God has for them.

We accomplish this by means of the most dedicated and committed staff that I have ever worked with. They are all highly trained and widely respected in their different areas of expertise. Everything you will read about in this report has been achieved through their hard work and because of their understanding of Jesus' words when He said, *"When you do this to the least of these, you do it unto me."*

We also depend on those whose hearts the Lord has stirred to join us. Some volunteer their services to help us expand our reach. Others provide us continuing training, which helps us to continually improve our services. Others contribute the funds needed to carry out all of our programs.

For all of our partners, thank you for helping us to reach out to those who are blind. May the Lord richly reward you for your willingness to be a part of improving the lives of our many blind friends.

  
Randy Weisser

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**“Plans to give you hope and a future...”** Jer 29:11



The year 2013 marked our 25th year of serving persons with visual impairment in the Philippines. The first project of our founder, Dr. Arthur Lown, was to produce a Filipino Braille Bible. Since then we have followed the example of Jesus when he asked blind Bartimaeus, “What do you want me to do for you?”

This has led us into a full spectrum of services for those who are blind; eye surgeries, education, rehabilitation, job training, etc., while still keeping the production of Bibles and Christian growth at the core of our mission.

With the improvement of the Philippine economy, some of our major international

donors have phased out of their work in the Philippines. This has required us to close down some of our programs and reduce the number of staff providing services. It has also put pressure on us to find alternative sources of local support while still looking for new international partners.

As long as the need is still there, we trust that the Lord will enable us to continue providing support services for our many blind friends around the Philippines. We will not leave Bartimaeus sitting beside the road. We will stop and ask him, “What do you want me to do for you?” We look forward to another 25 years of responding to that question. ♦

# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

## CHRISTIAN GROWTH



**W**ho sinned, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? That is the famous question asked by Jesus' disciples of a blind man they encountered in their travels. The correct answer is that if God gave blindness as punishment for sins, we would all be blind.

The core work of RBI is to introduce those who are blind to the God who created them and who loves them. We also want to provide every opportunity for blind persons to grow and mature in their Christian faith.

The first project of RBI was to produce a braille version of the Tagalog Bible. Now we are able to produce Braille Bibles in any Filipino dialect. Audio MP3 type Bibles are also available in Tagalog, Cebuano and English. We also produce large print Bibles in any dialect.

To encourage Bible reading, we conduct weekly Bible Studies for about 700 blind children in about 60 schools during the school year. Some of these children graduate from high school and enroll in Bible Colleges for further training. Eight of these Bible College graduates are working with us now to help encourage Christian growth among our blind friends.

Jesus answered his disciples' question by saying it wasn't anyone's sin who caused the man's blindness. It was so that you might see God do amazing things in the blind man's life. We see that everyday. ♦

## *THE BLIND RUN SO THE SIGHTED COULD SEE...*



**T**hey may have lost their sight, but not their vision. And their vision is to see each Filipino family reading a Bible and studying God's Word together.

Such was the drive that fueled the 20 blind runners' resolve to finish the 3-kilometer distance on March 9, 2013. The advocacy run, dubbed "May They Be One Bible Run" was organized by the Philippine Bible Society (PBS) as a nationwide campaign to raise awareness on the importance of Bible reading.

*"It is difficult to run when you are blind", claim RBI staff-pastors Joel, Jayrick, and Nick, all of them leaders of RBI's school-based Bible Study classes. "But I was motivated by the knowledge that my running could help get people closer to God through Bible reading", says Pastor Joel.*

Just like most persons with visual impairment, Pastor Nick is not used to running. But he was confident he, along with his colleagues, will finish without a hitch. *"I trusted our sighted guide and the rope we were holding added to that confidence", he said. He also said he considered it an honor to be part of a noble cause.*

It was the second time the three pastors joined the MTBO run. The first was in 2012, the year the campaign was launched. The 20 blind runners joined more than 5,000 runners from different walks of life. Start and finish lines were set in front of the Quirino Grandstand beside Rizal Park in Manila, Philippines.

Our goal is that given the opportunity, our blind pastors will indeed become the spiritual guides for the sighted. ♦

# EARLY INTERVENTION AND PRESCHOOL PROGRAM



**B**lind infants and toddlers typically fall behind in the normal developmental milestones for sighted children. But with early enough intervention, this can be minimized and they can soon catch up with their sighted peers.

We conduct two early intervention and preschool centers. One in Manila, with 45 children, and one in Davao, with 10 children. Each of our centers also serve as a training venue for student teachers. In 2013, we had 39 student teachers assigned to our centers. When these teachers graduate, they will be prepared to work with children with visual impairment. ♦



*Preschool Graduates are mainstreamed in regular schools.*

# INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM



Inclusive education means that schools are equipped to enroll blind children in the regular classroom. Our strategy is to provide training for both teachers and school administrators nationwide to make it possible for blind children to succeed in their classes. We also provide the equipment and materials needed to support the blind students' special needs.

This program has made it possible for three thousand blind children to enroll in schools in their communities all across the Philippines this last year.



Activity	Total
Enrolment of prep and elementary school students	2,589
Enrolment of secondary students	343
Pre-service and In-service training for teachers and school administrators	2,192
Orientation in inclusive education for LGUs and Universities	88
Trainings and tutorials for students	328

## HIGHER EDUCATION



As blind students graduate from secondary school, many of them are eager to take up higher education. Unfortunately, many colleges and universities still turn blind students away, even though they may have excelled at the high school level. Because of this ongoing problem we have made a determined effort to work with the Commission on Higher Education and with the school administrators to grant blind students the right to enroll.

We are beginning to see the tide change, with 150 blind students enrolled this year in colleges and universities around the country. ♦

Activity	Total
Students enrolled in Higher Education	150
Universities with visually impaired students enrolled	86
University administrators and faculty attending orientation workshop for the inclusion of students with visual impairment	158



# ACCESSIBLE MEDIA

Accessible Media refers to the efforts to make all forms of communication—print, videos, online information, etc., accessible to those who are blind. It traditionally has involved converting print documents into braille. Today it also means audio and digital. For instance, most of the Bibles we distribute now are digital audio Bibles, as pictured on the right.

To take advantage of the opportunities created by digital technology, we have created a Digital Publication Department at RBI. One of their first assignments is to explore how students with visual impairment can make use of textbooks on a tablet or other digital device.

One of the biggest obstacles we have faced in creating accessible versions of printed materials has been in securing permission from the copyright holders. For the last 17 years we have pushed for amendment of the copyright law which would exempt accessible materials made for the blind. In February 2013, this amendment was finally passed and signed into law. This gives to blind people what everyone else has enjoyed for generations—the right to read. ♦



Activity	Total
Braille reading materials for children and adults (in pages)	584,871
New titles of digital audio books	70
Training and support for schools and other organizations in computerized Braille production, incl. audio-digital production	23
Tactile graphic pages in Braille textbooks and other publications	2,958

# EYE CARE AND BLINDNESS PREVENTION PROGRAM



Most of the over one million adult cases of blindness in the country, and almost half of childhood is preventable or treatable if discovered early enough. Finding children who need surgery is a priority for us because of the opportunity to prevent a lifetime of blindness.

Our strategy to find and treat avoidable blindness is centered on training Community Health Workers. In a 2-day training, they learn how to conduct community eye screenings, and how to recognize and where to refer treatable cases of blindness. We started this training in mid-year 2013 and will reach our target of 10,000 trained workers by mid-2014. Because of the special urgency of childhood blindness cases, we are

Activity	Total
Eye surgeries for adults	1,348
Eye surgeries for children	159
Community Eye Screening	12,871
Primary Eye Care training for Community Health Workers	4,022

exploring ways to help fund these surgeries. They are far more expensive than similar adult surgeries and they require more follow up to insure success. But in terms of “sight-years” saved, they have a much better return on investment. ♦



*Primary Eye Care Training: Barangay Health Workers serve on the front lines of community eye health.*

# LOW VISION ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION PROGRAM



In August of 2013 we began three new strategies to improve services for those with low vision. That is the term we use for those who are “blind” but still have some usable vision left.

The first strategy has been to partner with the six Colleges of Optometry in the country to help make sure that all graduating optometrists have the skills they need to help patients with low vision.

The second strategy has been to partner with the two national associations of optometrists to offer continuing education courses in low vision for practicing optometrists around the country.

A third strategy has been to partner with the East Avenue Medical Center to establish and equip the first Low Vision Center in the country in a government hospital. With these efforts we hope to

Activity	Total
Optometry students attending low vision training and practicum opportunities	107
Practicing optometrists attending continuing education courses in low vision	54
School teachers, parents, and other stakeholders attending training in low vision	906
Patients provided with low vision assessment and treatment	265

dramatically increase the number of persons with low vision that are getting the right diagnosis and the proper prescriptions to make the best use of their remaining vision. ♦



We have chosen to focus our training in low vision on optometrists, both undergraduates and practicing clinicians. They number more than 12,000 nationwide and are generally accessible and affordable to the people that we work with.

The training includes how to prescribe special magnifying devices, but it also includes practical things that persons with low vision can do to maximize their residual vision. Contrast, lighting, distance, color and position are some of the factors that need to be considered, depending on the cause of the low vision. Persons with low vision will now be able to get the help they need. ♦

# REHABILITATION PROGRAM



## *A light to those in darkness...*

**A**t RBI we regularly meet people who have unexpectedly lost their sight as an adult. One day they have sight. The next day they are totally blind. And life as they know it comes to an end.

One of our strengths at RBI is that we have a number of blind staff who have been through the experience of losing their sight and who fully understand the despair and the sorrow and grieving that result. And yet, with the Lord's help, they have been able to deal with their loss and regain their lives. They have gone on to learn the skills necessary to live a normal life despite their blindness.

Our rehab program normally begins with one of our blind staff meeting with the newly blinded person for counseling. Later they begin to learn the skills needed which will enable them to do most of the things they used to do as a sighted person. Of course there are some things they won't be able to do, but it is always surprising for them to learn how many things they can do.

Later, after gaining a level of independence, we can focus on job training and job placement. The end goal is for blindness to be reduced to the level of a nuisance and not a life-defining limitation. ♦



*Computer training opens up almost unlimited possibilities for employment of persons with visual impairment.*

## SPECIAL PROJECTS: DISASTER RELIEF



We knew about 360 blind children who lived in the path of Super-Typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan) that struck the central Philippines in November of 2013. After the typhoon, we immediately began contacting the families and identified about 60 to 70 who needed emergency shelter assistance. Many were living under tarpaulins or other shelters made of scrap materials.

Our first efforts were concentrated on getting these families into safe shelters. After making good progress on that, we started a second project to build permanent, more typhoon-resistant homes

for about 20 selected families. Three of the selection criteria are: the level of need, ownership of the land, and parent support for the education of the blind child.

We have also started a project to rebuild or repair the Special Education Centers in 11 of the worst hit schools. These Centers cater to the special needs of students with disabilities and make it possible for the children to be included in regular classes. Because of the level of damage, most schools have to be completely rebuilt. ♦



We are replacing flattened homes with new concrete hollow block homes (at the right), Our hope is that the high side walls will make it less likely that the roofing will be lifted off by the winds.

The rebuilt Special Education Centers will be either one or two classrooms, depending on the number of students with disabilities. The Centers serve as Resource rooms for the students and their trained teachers. They will be fully furnished, including the special equipment and materials needed by students with visual impairment. ♦



*The first completed typhoon-resistant home in Bantayan Island, Cebu*



*The first SPED Center to be completed: Students with disabilities in Carles, Iloilo will be served by the Center.*



Cebu Branch Office (above)

Manila Office

RB





Office Staff (below)

Davao Branch Office (above)

# STAFF



# PROGRAMS AND SERVICES AT A GLANCE

PROGRAM	PROJECT	TOTAL
Eye Care and Blindness Prevention	Pediatric eye surgeries	159
	Adult eye surgeries	1,348
	Community Eye Screening	12,871
	Community Health Workers training in Primary Eye Care	4,022
Low Vision Assessment and Intervention Program	Optometry students attending low vision training and practicum opportunities	107
	Practicing optometrists attending continuing education courses in low vision	54
	School teachers, parents, and other stakeholders attending training in low vision	906
	Patients provided with low vision assessment and treatment	265
Inclusive Education Program	Enrolment of prep and elementary school students	2,589
	Enrolment of secondary students	343
	Enrolment of higher education students	197
	Pre-service and in-service training for teachers and school administrators	2,192
	Orientation in inclusive education for LGUs and universities	88
	Trainings and tutorials for students	328
Higher Education	Students enrolled in Higher Education	150
	Universities with visually impaired students enrolled	86
	University administrators and faculty attending orientation workshop for the inclusions of students with visual impairment	158
Accessible Media	Braille reading materials for children and adults (in pages)	584,871
	New titles of digital audio books	70
	Training and support for schools and other organizations in computerized Braille production, incl. audio-digital production	23
	Tactile graphic pages in Braille textbooks and other publications	2,958

# THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES



*Front row (seated), L-R:*

**Nora G. Lucero**, Vice-Chairperson; **Amelia M. Torrente**, Corporate Secretary;  
and **Damiana D. Exiomo**, Treasurer

*Back row (standing), L-R:*

**Randy Weisser**, Executive Director; **Eduardo C. Jimenez**, Board Member;  
**Lemuel A. David Salmo**, Chairperson; **David D. Gutierrez**, Auditor;  
and **Gary J. Jamora**, Board Member



## Ways You Can Help

- **Donate through BancNet ATM**

1. Go to **BILLS PAYMENT**
2. Select bills to pay **OTHERS**
3. Select from which account you want to charge the donation, either **SAVINGS** or **CURRENT**
4. Select **RESOURCES FOR THE BLIND** from the list
5. Enter the **AMOUNT** you wish to donate
6. Get transaction receipt.

For official receipt, kindly fax copy of transaction to (+632) 727-0077. Please state your name, exact mailing address, and contact number

- **Mail a Check Donation**

Make check payable to **Resources for the Blind, Inc.** and send to:

PO Box 1831, CPO  
Manila 1099, Philippines

-  **Donate Online**

Visit our website, [www.blind.org.ph](http://www.blind.org.ph), and click on “Donate Now” button for a secure online payment option.

- **Hand Over Your Gift**

RBI has offices in Manila, Cebu, and Davao  
Call us to pick up your donation,  
or visit our nearest office:

**RBI – Manila**

4<sup>th</sup> Flr. COTI Bldg., 623 EDSA, Cubao, QC  
Tel. Nos.: +63 02 726-3021 to 24

**RBI – Cebu**

Unit 204-205 Orient Building  
corner Echavez St. & San Miguel St., Cebu City  
Tel. No.: +63 032 415-0329

**RBI – Davao**

Rm. 418, 4<sup>th</sup> Flr., Central Plaza 1 Bldg.  
JP Laurel Ave. Bajada, Davao City  
Tel. No.: +63 082 225-8937

## **YOU CAN TURN THEIR DARKNESS INTO LIGHT**

Please join us in giving hope and a future to those who are blind.

Website: [www.blind.org.ph](http://www.blind.org.ph)

Like us on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/resourcesfortheblind](http://www.facebook.com/resourcesfortheblind)

RBI is certified by the Philippine Council of NGO Certification.

*(Donations and gifts coming from businesses and professionals are 100% tax deductible.)*

SEC Reg. No.: 148742

DSWD Licensed and Accredited