

AID TO THE BLIND

The Second Asian Conference on Work for the Blind met at Kuala Lumpur from May 20 to 30, 1963, sponsored by the World Council for the Welfare of the Blind, the American Foundation for Overseas Blind and the Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind at the invitation of the Government of Malaya.

*The following resolutions adopted on education, training and employment, are here reproduced for information*¹ :

Education—It is the government in every Asian country that has the basic responsibility of providing for a rapid expansion of educational opportunities for blind children. Governments in Asia, and the appropriate private organisations, should make plans on at least a five-year basis for expanding educational services for the blind, major emphasis being placed on integrated education.

Residential schools for the blind should be recognised by governments as an essential feature of the general education system and should receive financial support. The curriculum should be based on that of general schools in the area and the teaching staff should have special training as teachers of the blind. Residential schools should include in their responsibilities : full participation in evaluation procedures for admitting children to the most appropriate form of education ; special provision for slow learners, children with secondary handicaps or an unsatisfactory home background, maladjusted pupils and orphans ; the pupil's maintenance of maximum contact with their homes and the community at large so as to prepare them for full integration with society upon graduation ; and the provision of facilities for training teachers of the blind.

All children who can profit from integrated education should have an opportunity to do so.

The number of school places for Asian blind children should be doubled. The rural training facilities should be increased until at

¹ See *International Labour Review*, Geneva, 1964 No. 1.

least 1,000 rural blind workers can be trained and resettled annually as farmers and village craftsmen. In the main industrial centres at least 50 placement units should be trained regionally and deployed nationally and at least one modern mechanised sheltered workshop should be established in each of the three regions.

Provision of basic school textbooks in braille and a minimum of special equipment are essential features of any programme of education of the blind. Inexpensive equipment for duplicating braille should be acquired and the fullest use made of voluntary transcribers and readers.

A handbook or guide for teachers of the blind in the developing countries should be compiled under the auspices of UNESCO or UNICEF and international aid should be sought for translation into appropriate languages.

Training—The blind person must be assisted to accept the limitations of his handicap, and the community (including the family) must be brought to appreciate the role of the blind as useful members of society. Wherever possible, the process of adjustment should be undertaken in competently staffed adjustment centres which make adequate provision for developing mobility, daily living and communication skills, as well as appropriate pre-vocational training. Such services, however, may be provided in educational establishments and rural or urban vocational training centres.

Substantial opportunities exist throughout Asia for the employment of well-trained blind people in urban areas. In the development of national plans the main emphasis should be placed on preparing blind workers for open employment, but an important place should also be reserved for special workshops, utilising modern industrial techniques for production and sub-contract work. To prepare workers for both forms of employment, it is recommended that every country should have at least one centre for evaluation for training blind people in simple operations in light industries.

National and regional arrangements should be made for the training of placement officers as far as possible, exclusively for the blind, who should be full-time specialists and who may themselves be blind. They should survey the whole range of available industrial

MISCELLANEOUS

and commercial occupations and provide in-service training for blind people who enter factories.

Employment—Governments should give a lead by employing suitably qualified blind people. Workshop managers should be competent administrators with broad knowledge of industrial processes and marketing requirements. The plant, layout and production techniques used in workshops for the blind should be comparable with those prevailing in regular industry.

Major emphasis in any national programme should be given to providing adequate facilities for rural training and for subsequent resettlement. Staff training centres should be created as speedily as possible in each of the three regions. Rural centres should be simple in character and their curricula related directly to conditions in the villages to which the trainees will return. Wherever possible a unit for training blind farmers should be established as part of the programme of a general agricultural training centre.

Special provision should be made to meet the particular needs of blind women. This should include courses in home economics, the care of children and personal grooming and the development of the normal social attitudes expected of women in a given community. Every effort should be made to locate and to ensure the adjustment of married women who become blind, so that their normal activities may be resumed without serious interruption to family life. Vocational and rural training centres should train suitable blind women for tasks normally expected of women in the area.

Training outside Asia should be restricted to key members of government and voluntary organisations who, on their return, will play important roles in the development of programme policy and the operation of national or regional staff training services.

Countries in the Asian region should do everything possible to manufacture basic equipment locally rather than rely exclusively on imported supplies. Production centres could be developed at carefully selected regional points.