



**THE CARIBBEAN COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED**  
CELEBRATING MORE THAN 18 YEARS OF VISION 2020 “RIGHT TO SIGHT” IN THE CARIBBEAN – 2001-2018  
SUMMARIZING MORE THAN 50 YEARS OF OUR DEVELOPMENT ADVOCACY AND ACTIONS IN THE CARIBBEAN  
Preventing blindness and visual impairment; while restoring sight and creating opportunities for persons whose sight cannot be restored  
[www.eyecarecaribbean.com](http://www.eyecarecaribbean.com); [www.v2020caribbean.com](http://www.v2020caribbean.com); [www.ccb1967.com](http://www.ccb1967.com)

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The Caribbean Council for the Blind and Visually Impaired was established in 1967. In 2000, we collaborated with SightSavers, CARICOM, PAHO-WHO and a wide range of: National, Regional and International organizations, to launch Vision 2020 “The Right to Sight” in the Caribbean. Over the past five decades, we have been able to help more than two million people: Prevent blindness and visual impairment or have their sight restored; while helping to create opportunities for persons whose sight cannot be restored.

Given the contribution (to overall economic development) of good sight (to the majority) and equitable access (to persons who are blind) our work has had a profound and intrinsic macroeconomic effect on the wellbeing of millions of people throughout the CARICOM space.

- When people (with visual impairments) have reliable access to good quality and affordable prescription eyeglasses, their social and economic contribution to family and society is maximized.
- When people who are blind have their sight restored through affordable, available and accessible cataract surgeries, their economic productivity is restored and
- When children and adults whose sight cannot be restored, get equal access to social, economic and other cultural services, they become net contributors to economic development and entire communities and societies benefit”. (c) Arvel L Grant, C.Sw, B.Sc-Sw (Hons) DPA MPH

As we enter the 51<sup>st</sup> anniversary of activist development, we are emphasizing our determination to repeat and expand our programme of advocacy and service to the peoples of our region. The following are some of our significant actions, which contributed to improved eye health and inclusive blindness services over the past five decades:

**1967 - 1977** – Annual consultative meetings by member organizations of CCB.

**1978 - Trinidad & Tobago:** Establishment of the first secretariat of CCB.

**1979** - Implementation of the Inter Island Eye Service. An itinerant program of Ophthalmologic services to islands, which did not have access to Ophthalmologic services.

**1980 - Antigua & Barbuda:** Relocation of secretariat from Port of Spain, Trinidad.

**1980 – Barbados: Queen Elizabeth Hospital, UWI Barbados:** Commence training and deployment of indigenous Ophthalmologists to serve countries of the Eastern Caribbean and Guyana.

**1980 - Grenada:** Convened the first regional quadrennial planning conference to develop a comprehensive approach to: Eye care; Inclusive Education Services and Rehabilitation (Now, Adjustment to Blindness Services).

**1980 - Guyana:** Established the first national itinerant education program for children who are blind; Initiative followed by the establishment of similar programs throughout the Eastern Caribbean and Belize.

**1982 - St. Vincent & The Grenadines:** Implemented the first regional meeting of young blind people to discuss and develop leadership and advocacy skills.

**1983** - Consolidated the (then) annual meetings of the Inter Agency Coordinating Group (evolving to the V2020 Collaborating Group of INGOCGs).

**1983 - Jamaica:** Commenced collaborated with the Ministry of Health to establish the first National Prevention of Blindness Committee in the Caribbean.

**1984 - Barbados:** Convened the 2<sup>nd</sup> quadrennial planning conference of CCB, leading to an expansion of the Council's development portfolio focusing on: Blindness prevention and sight restoration; Inclusive education for children with visual impairment; and inclusive services for adults living with visual impairment.

**1985 – Antigua & Barbuda:** Collaborated with: CNIB, CIDA (now Canadian Global Affairs) and HKI to implement the first of several annual regional training courses for Rehabilitation Field Officers (now Adjustment to Blindness Technicians etc.); trained and assigned more than 70 personnel across the Caribbean.

**1986 - Region-wide:** Commenced implementation of a 3-year project to strengthen the institutional capacity of member agencies of CCB.

**1987 - Region-wide:** Begun implementation of a 3-year summer course for all 59 teachers supporting children with blindness or visual impairment (across the Caribbean) to achieve a standard level of technical knowledge in a body of specialist teachers, who were (mostly) untrained in special education techniques. The Tower Hotel in Guyana and the School for the Blind in Jamaica rotated as summer campuses for the 3-year project.

**1989 - Jamaica:** Established the Regional Diploma in The Education of Teachers of the visually impaired, Mico Teachers College, Jamaica; Trained more than 50 teachers to date. Programme currently upgraded to 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> degree programmes – The Mico University College, Jamaica.

**1992 St. Lucia: Collaborated with PAHO-WHO** to implement the first of several regional and national symposia to stimulate development of National Prevention of Blindness Committees and Programs.

**1994 - Region-wide:** Commenced implementation of a series of regional and national workshops for women who are blind, aimed at enhancing personal development and leadership skills among the women.

**1994 – CCB Secretariat:** Incorporated the Caribbean Council for the Blind (Inc) in the United States. Initiative negatively influenced by the “9/11” experience.

**1994 CCB Secretariat:** Launched the Regional Equipment Maintenance Service, to ensure sustainability of equipment provided to health, education and other partners across the Caribbean.

**1994 (and beyond) – Guyana and the Leeward Islands:** Provision of funding and technical assistance re the training of 255 Nurses in Guyana, Grenada, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines in Primary Eye Care; Enhancing delivery of basic services to citizens at Health Centers and Clinics, and referral of cases requiring specialist attention to the appropriate level in the Health Care System.

**1995 – Guyana:** Commenced funding and otherwise facilitated development of OPD & surgical programs at the Georgetown and New Amsterdam Public Hospitals.

**1998 – Guyana:** Initiated negotiations with Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Health re establishment of eye clinics (vision centers) in Government hospitals across Guyana, commencing at the Georgetown Public Hospital. The Eye clinics are developed to provide a basic package of eye health services to the patients of the public health services; While providing opportunities for clinical attachment to an expanding

programme of training for Refractionists (refractive Optometrists) as well as Optometrists trained at the levels of Bachelors Of Science and Optometry Doctorate- with a supporting eye glass laboratory in the offices of CCB-Eye Care Guyana. All to ensure that persons, who are poor or near poor, have access to a basic package of eye health services including prescription glasses and low vision appliances.

**2000 – Guyana:** Formalized the establishment of the National Low Vision Center; now operating on the premises of the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC); Service having expanded to more than 12 vision centers in regional, district and cottage hospitals across Guyana.

**2000 – Guyana:** Initiated programme with Government of Guyana to develop cataract surgical programs (starting with the GPHC) on a cost recovery basis; also received Cabinet clearance for project - eventually replaced by an ORBIS-led initiative.

**2000 (July) - Trinidad & Tobago:** Coordinating and participating in the launch of Vision 2020 (The Right to Sight) in the Caribbean (Tobago). Resulting in special focus on: Cataract surgery; Management and treatment of glaucoma; Detection and treatment of diabetic Retinopathy; Treatment of conditions which could lead to blindness or visual impairment in children and refractive error and low vision services. All as a complement to education, training and other adjustment services for persons whose sight cannot be restored.

**2001 (July) – Nassau, Bahamas: CCB collaborated with The International Center for Eye Health** - Relocating the faculty of the V2020 Planning Module (University Of London) to train senior nurses, doctors and administrators of member agencies and partner hospitals (from eight countries) in planning and managing community eye health programmes.

**2002 – Jamaica: Starting in Mandeville** - Development and implementation of a cost recovery program supporting provision of cataract surgery in ten hospitals across the Caribbean. The program is at different stages of implementation.

**2003 - CCB and PAHO-WHO** collaborated to prepare the first in a series of 5-year Vision 2020 Strategic Frame Work (documents) to guide the work of the Council.

**2003 - CCB and PAHO-WHO** collaborated to develop and promulgate the Primary Eye Care Training Manual. The manual still guides the training of primary health care workers across the Caribbean.

**2003 - Trinidad & Tobago: Regional Advocacy Workshop** - Developed and initiated a rights-based approach to certain of Council's programming asserting that all individuals or groups who have a visual impairment are entitled to:

- i. Quality eye health care at, primary, secondary and tertiary levels of their national health services;
- ii. Access to inclusive education services (at least) equal to that available to their peers;
- iii. Equitable opportunities to earn a just and viable livelihood;
- iv. And a safe and secure private and public environment.

**2004 – Caribbean-wide:** Commenced development of national V2020 advocacy strategy requiring: Appointment of national focal persons; Hosting of a regional symposium for national focal persons; Establishment or revamping of national committees; Appointment of national coordinator; Development and implementation of national plans and programs.

**2004 – Barbados:** Commence training of persons who are blind to serve as National IT Instructors, to operate national IT training labs, as part of the Regional Information Technology Services for the Visually Impaired. IT labs providing basic IT training to persons who are blind established in 9 countries across the region.

**2005 – Commonwealth of Dominica: CCB, SightSavers and PAHO-WHO collaborated with the MOH** to implement a pilot in the screening for and treatment of Diabetic Retinopathy. The Commonwealth of Dominica is now one of several countries implementing DR Screening, referral and treatment services across the Caribbean.

**2005 Guyana - Collaborated with PAHO-WHO and the Ministry of Education to implement** a pilot project of vision screening in schools, leading to development of a regional protocol to guide school-based vision screening.

**2005 – Jamaica:** Commencement of a series of glaucoma KAP studies (starting in Eye Clinic, MRH and the FISH Clinic) eventually expanded to include similar studies in: Barbados, Guyana and St. Lucia.

**2006 – Guyana: University of Guyana (Public Health Unit) -** Commencement of regional training program for refractionists, refractive optometrists, trained to practice at level 2 of the World Council of Optometry's 4-level scope of practice.

**2007- Caribbean-wide:** Commenced the deployment of refractionists across CARICOM- Eventually serving: eye departments, district and cottage hospitals; Community vision centres (primary and secondary level eye clinics) in: Antigua-Barbuda; Guyana; Haiti; Jamaica; and St. Lucia, with new programmes being prepared for: St. Kitts-Nevis; St. Vincent and two additional health regions in Jamaica.

**2007- Caribbean-wide:** Commenced advocacy and technical preparations toward establishment of national programmes for the training of optometrists, with the first two

programmes being launched in Guyana (UOG) and Trinidad (UWI). Similar programmes are being contemplated for: The Windward Islands, The Leeward Islands, Haiti and Jamaica.

**2008 – Caribbean-wide:** Commenced development of a Caribbean Vision 2020 project, in collaboration with SightSavers and the European Commission.

**2009 - Guyana:** Commenced negotiations with the Faculty Board, University Of Guyana, re approval and implementation of the 4-year Bachelors of Science in Optometry, now preparing to launch discussions toward establishment of the Optometry Doctorate.

**2010 - CCB Secretariat:** Launched the Council's web-based conferencing complex. Facility now hosts most of Council's international meetings.

**2010 – Caribbean-wide:** Commence implementation of the Caribbean Vision 2020 project in collaboration with SightSavers and the European Commission. Project has five primary target countries and ten secondary partners across CARICOM.

**2010 - Guyana:** Facilitated and funded the launch of the Bachelors of Science in Optometry – University of Guyana and continues to support the programme. The programme has graduated more than 80 Optometrists and is preparing to commence offering of the Optometry Doctorate (OD).

**2010 – Caribbean-wide:** Begun providing 12 medical doctors with scholarships to specialize as Ophthalmologists. The successful applicants participated from: Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica and St. Lucia.

**2010 - Caribbean-wide:** Inaugurated an international network of Government and not-for-profit hospitals and eye clinic, serving as focal points for clinical attachment by Optometry students of the University of Guyana. Participating clinics are located in: Antigua & Barbuda; Commonwealth Of Dominica; The Cooperative Republic of Guyana; Port-Au-Prince (The Republic of Haiti) and Mandeville (Jamaica).

**2010 - Antigua & Barbuda:** Met with the Honorable Baldwin Spencer, Prime Minister of Antigua & Barbuda and members of His Cabinet – Discussed and agreed introduction of a basic package of eye health services in all Polyclinics in Antigua.

**2011 - Caribbean-wide:** Organized and continue to implement the annual meeting of Vision 2020 Committees and their representatives from all 15 member countries of CARICOM.

**2012 - Jamaica:** Negotiated and received clearance from the Ministry of Health to establish eye clinics in public hospitals across the Northeastern Health region of Jamaica- 5 Optometrists trained at the University Of Guyana to facilitate implementation of this programme.

**2013 - Caribbean-wide:** Commenced technical preparations for the implementation of a series of diabetic retinopathy Situation Analysis, across CARICOM. DR Situation Analysis has been implemented in: Antigua & Barbuda; Belize; Commonwealth of Dominica; The Cooperative Republic of Guyana; Jamaica and St. Lucia. Arrangements are being made to implement similar assessments across the CARICOM space.

**2013 - Antigua & Barbuda:** Collaborated with the Government and people to launch three community vision centres (eye clinics) at Polyclinics in: Claire Hall; Grays Farm and Johnson's Point.

**2013 - Antigua & Barbuda: The Caribbean Council For The Blind & Visually Impaired** received Cabinet Decision from the Government, to take over the Blackburn Building (et al). CCB has commenced retrofitting and equipping of the building. The facility currently served as CCB's headquarters and the National Vision Centre, a modern (well equipped) eye clinic featuring 8 examination lanes, with client waiting areas seating up to 35. Thousands of Government employees and other clients have had their eyes examined at the facility.

**2013 - Office of the CEO-CCB:** Commenced discussion with the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust, regarding possible implementation of a Caribbean Diabetic Retinopathy screening and treatment programme.

**2014 – Office of the CEO-CCB:** Commenced and continue to coordinate Scientific Group, implementing a series of KAPB studies in Diabetic Retinopathy. The Institution Review Board, UWI, Cave Hill have approved studies. Studies are being implemented in: Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica and St. Lucia.

**2014 - Guyana: CEO-CCB** Attended and witnessed the graduation of the first cohort of 22 Optometrists to have been trained at the University of Guyana, under a programme initiated and supported by the Caribbean Council for the Blind, with financial support by the European Commission and Sight Savers. Funding is being sought to support development of similar college and university-based training programmes in: Jamaica, The Windward and Leeward islands.

**2014 - Office of the CEO-CCB:** Recruitment of the first of several optometrists to support an expanded eye health service in Antigua & Barbuda and the wider Eastern Caribbean, including a number of the British Dependent Territories.

**2014 - Office of the CEO-CCB:** Recruited and assigned an optometry and Training Services Officer, to the Eye Department, Mandeville Regional Hospital (Jamaica) to support the consolidation and expansion of optometry and related services being provided under an existing partnership between, CCB, The SRHA and its network of hospitals. Three additional optometrists are at different stages of assignment to support the expanding eye health programme in the Southern Region of Jamaica. The service is being expanded outward from the MRH to the Black River and Maypen Hospitals.

**2014 - Caribbean-wide:** Developed a Communications Strategy to guide the communications practices of the Caribbean Council for the Blind.

**2015 - Office of the CEO-CCB:** Signed agreement with the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust to manage the implementation of a programme to screen for and treat Diabetic Retinopathy in: Belize, The Commonwealth of Dominica; Jamaica and St. Lucia. After facilitating implementation of the programme over two years CCB declined further involvement given the substantial cost increases (to CCB) on account of the dramatic fluctuations between the GBP, The US\$ and the Eastern Caribbean Currency.

**2015 - Antigua & Barbuda: CEO-CCB** met with the Honorable Gaston Browne, Prime Minister of Antigua-Barbuda and members of His Cabinet, to discuss expansion of eye health services in Antigua & Barbuda to include:

- Consolidation of existing vision centre services at: Claire Hall; Grays Farm and Johnson's Point;
- Development and operation of additional vision centers (eye clinics) in up to 6 new locations across Antigua & Barbuda;
- Provision of specialized surgical services by teams of visiting Ophthalmologists, supported by CCB-Eye Care Caribbean.
- An offer of up to 3 scholarships to train Medical Doctors as Ophthalmologists;
- Offer of scholarships to train Refractionists and Optometrists for Antigua & Barbuda.
- Eventual establishment of the Bachelors Of Science (equivalent in Optometry) at The Antigua State College, to evolve into the Bachelors Of Science in Optometry when the University of Antigua is established.
- Strategies for ensuring that Government services are inclusive and accessible to persons who are living with significant visual impairments or blindness.

**2016 - Office of the CEO-CCB:** Commencement of technical preparations for the launch of a Caribbean-wide Occupational Optometry programme. The programme will deliver eye health services to people where they work and or live, starting with a pilot in Antigua & Barbuda.



**2016 - Antigua and Barbuda: CEO-CCB** collaborated with: The Mount St. Johns Medical Centre and the Ministry of Health and the Environment to implement the Barbuda Eye Service. The project was led by Khohane Blake, Optometrist, Medical Epidemiologist and DR Grader (at Master Class). More than six hundred Barbudans received comprehensive eye exams and 185 custom-made prescription eyeglasses were presented to Barbudans. A follow-up programme was scuttled by the ravages of the 2017 hurricane season, on the sub-region.

**2017: CEO-CCB** met with Hon. Gaston Browne, Prime Minister of Antigua & Barbuda (and members of his Cabinet) to discuss and agree development and implementation of the Public Sector Eye Service. Cabinet approved the programme in May of 2017.

**2017 – June:** The Public Sector Eye Service was launched in June of the same year. It is anticipated that more than 11 thousand public servants will receive biennial eye exams (provided by CCB). The Government of Antigua & Barbuda is paying CCB to provide eyeglasses for Government employees earning less than two thousand EC dollars (after statutory deductions) if they require prescription eyeglasses. The programme is being led by Khohane M. Blake, Optometrist, Medical Epidemiologist and DR Grader (At Master Class).

**2018 - CCB** preparing to convene its quadrennial planning meeting. The delegates will adopt a series of strategic themes, which will guide the development priorities of the organization over the next 5 to ten years.

Arvel Grant B.Sc-Sw (Hons) DPA MPH

Chief Executive Officer (CCB-Eye Care Caribbean)

[Arvel.grant@eyecarecaribbean.com](mailto:Arvel.grant@eyecarecaribbean.com)