



South African Guide-Dogs Association for the Blind

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Guide Dogs ● Service Dogs ● Autism Support Dogs ● Orientation and Mobility

Orientation & Mobility Training Services



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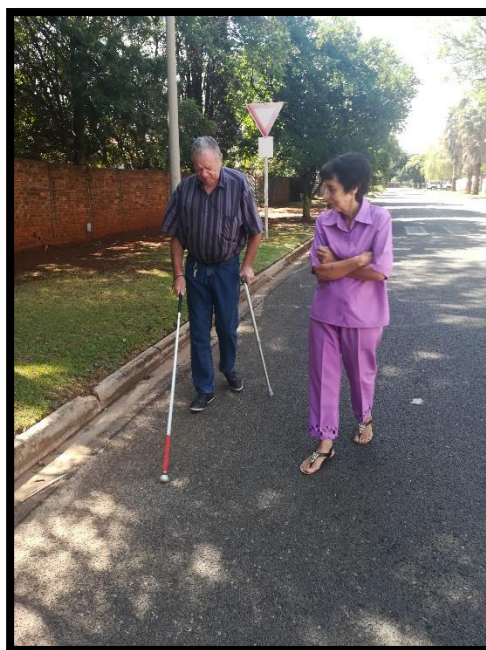
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Introduction

Mrs Sithole lost her vision due to diabetic retinopathy a year ago. Her daughter insisted she move in with her family. They are at work and school all day, so she is alone in the home. Mrs Sithole can only leave the house when accompanied by one of her children or grandchildren. Her family have forbidden her to use the kettle or stove while they are at work, for fear she will hurt herself. She feels she has no purpose and is a burden to her daughter who works full time, but still has to come home to house work and cooking chores.

She sits in a chair all day listening to the radio, she is isolated from the friends she once had, the home she once ran, the garden she tended, the cooking and baking she once enjoyed so much. Mrs Sithole has lost her vision, her independence and her dignity.

This need not happen. With your assistance our Orientation and Mobility Practitioners can provide services to people who are visually impaired. Their work in communities, to train and raise awareness of the plight of these people can ensure that they have the best chance of being productive members of society. Dignity is a basic human right.

Statement of Need

Although there is no national blind and partially sighted register in South Africa, at this time it is estimated that approximately 400 000 South Africans could be registered as blind and another 1 000 000 individuals could be registered as partially sighted *.

Orientation and Mobility Practitioners (O&M Practitioners) are trained to teach adults and children with visual impairments the adaptive skills they require, in order to increase their independence. This includes daily living skills and the use of a long cane to navigate their physical environment. This in turn leads to increased self-confidence, self-worth and dignity. Being independent enables them to find employment, study, attend school, start a small business or simply get on with the daily activities of living safely, as part of their family and community. The focus is on affording people with a visual impairment the opportunity to live meaningful lives.

Each qualified O&M Practitioner can train approximately forty to fifty people who are blind or visually impaired in each year of their working life. If a practitioner works for twenty years, he or she can potentially train eight hundred people who are visually impaired. Currently there are no more than sixty practising O&M Practitioners in South Africa, of which, some work part time. Clearly the demand for the services of O&M Practitioners far exceeds the supply.

As there are limited employment opportunities for O&M Practitioners in the public education and health sector, the responsibility of employment is shouldered by non-profit organisations with limited funds. These factors work hand in hand to limit service provision to people who are visually impaired.

*StatsSA. 2014. *Mid-Year Population Estimates 2014*. www.statsa.gov.za.

World Health Organization. 2012. *Global Data on Visual Impairment 2010*. www.who.int



Our Mission and Vision

With there clearly being a huge need for Orientation and Mobility Services, our organisation is positioned to be able to provide these services. Our *Mission* is to enhance the mobility and independence of South African people who have visual impairments, so as to access independence in their own homes, schools, workplaces and communities.

Our *Vision* is to achieve the highest level of excellence in the provision of orientation and mobility services directly to visually impaired people.

Support Service Programme

S A Guide-Dogs Association employs five qualified O&M Practitioners to provide direct services to the public.

Our O&M Direct Services team has the task of making the public aware of the services they provide. As there are so few O&M Practitioners in South Africa, the public are not always aware that these services are available. They are also under the impression that the services would be expensive. All our training services are **free of charge** to the public.

Areas we provide services in South Africa Gauteng Johannesburg:

- East Rand
- West Rand
- Johannesburg South
- Greater Johannesburg suburbs
- Greater Tshwane area

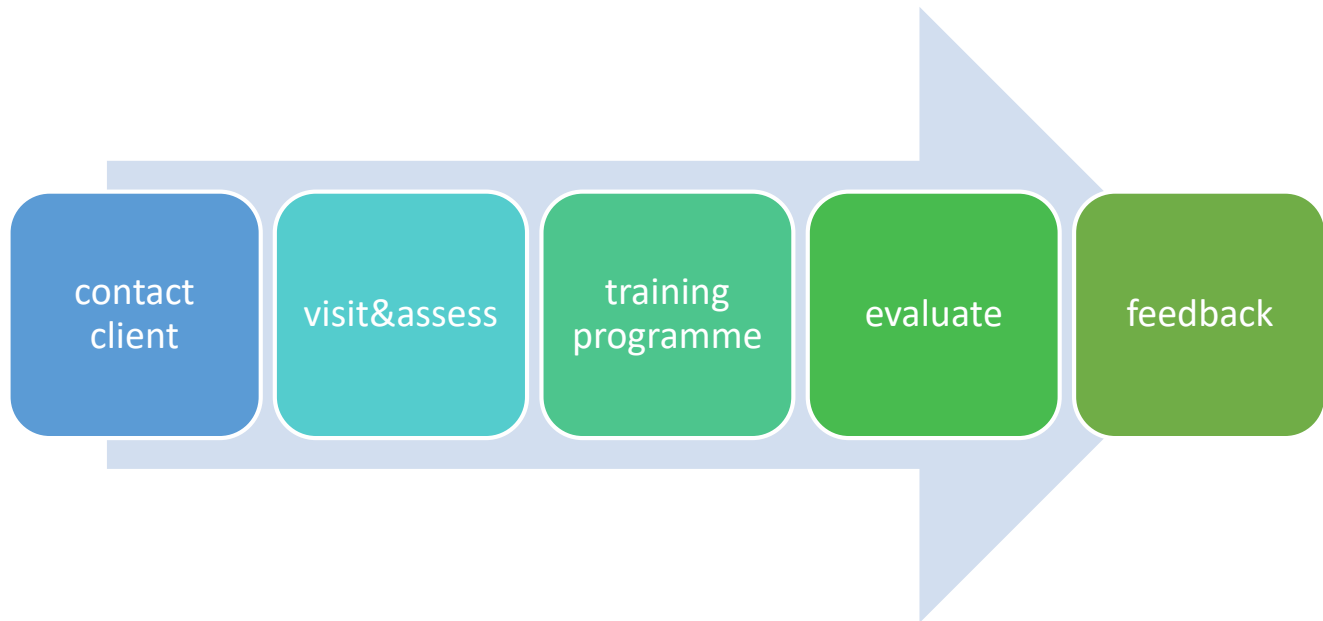
We receive referrals from:

- Retina SA
- Optometrists
- Ophthalmologists
- Occupational therapists
- Family members and individuals
- University and College Disability Units

O&M Practitioners also build up a referral network in communities by visiting the local clinics and networking with disability self-help groups. Their clients range from preschool children to the elderly. The majority of their work is in the urban township.



Once a client has been referred for services our O&M Practitioners will follow a process to provide individual services to match their needs:



A client is contacted and an appointment is made to interview the person. The O&M Practitioner will travel to the client's home to conduct the interview and take a case history. The needs of the client are determined and the O&M Practitioner will work out a training programme to be able to reach the desired goals. The client is then visited on average twice a week for two to three months, or until all the goals are reached.

Skills of daily living include:

- Home care tasks such as sweeping
- Peeling and chopping vegetables
- Cooking
- Ironing
- Pouring hot water
- Identifying money
- Using an ATM

Long cane training includes:

- Different techniques
- Identifying landmarks and clues
- Routes in the known environment to local shops, clinic
- Routes in the wider environment including public transport

The O&M Practitioner will then evaluate the clients' progress and report on the success of the training to their manager. The manager will then phone the clients to gather feedback on the training which has been provided.



Community Awareness Talk at a Clinic

LongCane Training of University Student



Route Training at the Hospital



Identifying money

O&M Practitioners provide their clients with the following assistive devices and teach them how to use them:

Liquid level indicator. This device beeps to indicate when the water has reached the correct level.



Money template and signature guide. This allows for identification of notes and a guide to write a signature.



Folding cane which is used to provide feedback of the environment in which a person is walking. The value of the set of devices is currently **\$47**



Our Beneficiaries

Our beneficiaries are the visually impaired people of South Africa, many of whom have additional disabilities to cope with. Most of our work takes place in the township setting where people rely on disability grants to survive. These individuals are no longer a burden to their families, as they can care for themselves and are able to travel independently.

Once elderly individuals have undergone orientation and mobility programmes they no longer require an income-earning member of the family to stay away from work or school in order to look after them. In the South African context, where poverty and unemployment are a major issue for the majority of the population, this new found independence is vital. With an increasing number of people becoming blind later in life, it is important that they continue being productive members of society.

Children in schools likewise benefit enormously from the training offered by O&M Practitioners, and have the advantage of entering adulthood with the skills necessary to live independently. Orientation and mobility skills taught to tertiary education students enables them to access an education which will equip them to enter the workforce. Being able to use the public transport system also empowers them to be access gainful employment.

Costs for 8 people for 3 months	
O&M Practitioner Salary	\$ 4968.30
Assistive Devices	\$ 477
Transport:	
Car	\$ 699
Fuel	\$ 438
Tolls	\$ 60
Insurance	\$ 150
Admin Costs:	
Tablets/data	\$ 14
Office costs	\$ 332
Electronic admin system	\$ 199
Total	\$ 7337.3

This means it costs us **\$ 917** to train one person for three months or **\$ 306** to train a person per month



Future goals

Our organisation will be providing Orientation and Mobility Services nationally by expanding our service provision to Durban, Bloemfontein, Port Elizabeth and Cape Town from 2021. We are currently training the O&M Practitioners required to provide these services. These students will provide basic services to the community during their practical training placements in 2019 and 2020. To support the training of these students please see our Student Funding Proposal.

Conclusion

Many people consider losing their sight to be the worst thing that could happen to them. They often express a fear of blindness and consider all the things they could no longer do because of it. They believe their lives would be over and can only imagine being dependent on others for their every need. This is a very real fear! Unfortunately, it becomes a reality if you do not have access to a trained Orientation and Mobility Practitioner, who can teach you how to live a different and adapted life as an independent person who is visually impaired.

If Mrs Sithole received training from an O & M Practitioner, she could learn how to use the kettle and stove safely. She could once again bake and cook by learning specific adaptive techniques. With long cane training Mrs Sithole could once again walk to the local community centre and clinic to interact with her peers. Learning how to use an ATM and to identify money would enable her to access her disability grant independently. Mrs Sithole could also be taught how to create a vegetable garden, enabling her to contribute meaningfully to the family. Visual impairment does not have to be the end of a productive and happy life; it can be the beginning of a different type of life.

We believe that financial involvement by philanthropic organisations such as yours could play a meaningful role in changing the lives of visually impaired South Africans, who otherwise would have been forgotten by society.

