



The Torch



Edition 24

The North-West University (NWU) has included goalball - a sport specifically played by visually impaired people - in its 2022 sporting codes

On 25 February the South African National goalball champions team played a demonstration game on the NWU's Mahikeng Campus to introduce the sport to students.

According to Jim Molautsi, director of Student Life, one of the department's goals is to create a culture that celebrates diversity and enhances social cohesion.

"We can do more to include students with disabilities in our student life co-curricular offerings, and therefore we decided to introduce goalball in 2022," he explains.

Vida Mutlaneng from the Disability Rights Unit (DRU) says students are excited and keen to start practicing and competing.

"The introduction of goalball has emphasised the importance of including students with disabilities in sports, and this is a great achievement for the DRU," says Vida.

"I enjoyed the game very much – it made me realise that I can do many things, no matter what the circumstance," says Tshidisegang Mothobi, a first-year student.

Solomon Mutlaneng Jr says it was a wonderful experience to learn about the sport and to participate.

"Being there made me realise that living with a disability should not stop you from being active," he adds.

About goalball

Goalball is a game played by two teams of three players each, with each side having a maximum of three substitutions.

The game is played indoors on a court of 18m by 9m, divided by a centre line. The aim of the game is to try to throw a ball that has bells embedded in it into the opponents' goal.

The ball is thrown by hand and never kicked, and teams alternate throwing or rolling the ball from one end of the playing area to the other, while players remain in the area of their own goal in both defence and attack. A game consists of two 12-minute halves with a three-minute half time.

The International Blind Sports Federation is the official governing body for the sport.



Goalball players in action during the demonstration game on the NWU's Mahikeng Campus



The NWU mascot, Eagi, is eager to learn about goalball

Performing under Pressure



By Jeremy Opperman
March 2022

Like countless others, I watch, read and listen to the impotent and morbid fascination of the horrors unfolding in Ukraine.

But one rather different interview caught my ear while listening to the BBC.

It was the manager of the Ukrainian winter para Olympic team, still competing in Beijing. Speaking in excellent English, with exhausted clarity and indelible sadness etched into every syllable, he tried to articulate how the team was feeling about their country literally disintegrating in their absence.

Far beyond the incredulity and outrage at the atrocity of the invasion and war itself, was the equally incredulous notion that they simply could not return to their homeland. Knowing that for many if not most of the team, comprising athletes, coaches, doctors, and many fans and support staff, their homes would in all probability, not exist any longer.

In fact, how would they even know?

Which made me think about performance under pressure. Most world-class athletes perform under pressure, of course, the pressure of a tough opponent, an old injury, a hostile crowd, poor weather; you know what I mean.

But how many athletes have to perform while knowing that their country, city, town, village, suburb, or homes are literally being devastated at exactly the moment they are supposed to be performing.

I was trying to think of an analogy of what that must be like but realised that no analogy could do it justice.

And, amazingly, their performance is unquestionably excellent as they ranked second in the competition.

Spare a thought for those athletes, exclude the others in their entourage from the equation if you will, for the moment.

Every one of those para Olympians have significant disabilities.

They will have, a visual or hearing or physical or psychosocial impairment of some kind.

Notwithstanding their levels of independence, every one of them will have known and needed major support back home, rehab services, schools, accessible transport, assistive devices, prosthetics, technology, and service animals not to mention loving, encouraging teaching human support.

Consider just for a minute, what they will be going through when they leave Beijing after the conclusion of the Winter Para Olympic on March 13.

They won't be returning at all.

They will all, without exception, be going somewhere strange.

Hungary? Poland? they don't even know yet.

Frankly, it is almost too hard to bear thinking about, but we must.

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The Story of Sophie

Being blind, Sophie's sons used to have to do absolutely everything for her. This included walking her to the outside toilet, opening the door for her, putting the latch on the door for her, waiting for her outside the door, and then walking her back to the door of their house. The two young men had to always plan between them, so that one of them could be home with their mother. You will be glad to hear that this is no longer the case.

Part of our practitioner's training of the blind family member, is to include the family members in the training. This is, so that they can support and encourage their blind member's independence. In Sophie's case, her two sons were ready to help their mom's growing independence.

Between Sophie's house and the outside toilet is a big open swept yard. This was simply too far for her to orientate herself and find her way on her own to the toilet and back to the house, without getting lost. To help Sophie, Thabelo asked her sons to put up a few stakes: the first one close to the house, another one midway to the toilet and a last one at the toilet. Thabelo then put up a string from the stake at the door of the house, along the second stake, all the way to the toilet door. This picture shows how Sophie follows the string back to her house with her hand.



Sophie speaks of her regaining her dignity through independence training. Thank you Gareth for the role you have played in all the “Sophies” we have trained, and in them all regaining their dignity.

Beneficiary News

Happy Birthday



Kobus is celebrating a very special birthday this month. The staff and directors of St Dunstan's wishes you a happy birthday and all that is beautiful.

Congratulations



Lelethu Mtwana obtained her BA degree at the University of the Western Cape in 2022. She is currently pursuing her Honours in Psychology at the same institution. We wish her nothing but the best for her future.

New Ian Fraser Bursary Holders 2022

Zack Nyathi



Zack Nyathi is a partially sighted law student at the University of Cape Town. He is very altruistic and inquisitive and often seeks answers and solutions to the socio-economic problems of society. What better way to do that than the legal profession? He chose the legal profession because court orders are binding and have an immediate impact on the lives of those in need of various necessities of life.

He is a Sustainable Development Goals Education director at the United Nations Association of South Africa, University of Cape Town, a senior editor at Altum Sonatur and a member of the yet to be constituted Law Students' Council, and also works with the Johannesburg Attorneys Association to help students gain practical field experience. These are some of the little strides he takes towards ensuring social justice and the representation of our masses.

He is a very ambitious individual with aspirations to establish a successful commercial law firm soon. He will be specialising in insolvency law, tax law, transactional (contract) law, and deceased estates.

Juanita Oberholzer



As a homemaker, Juanita spends her time taking care of her pets and of course the family. Besides her studies keeping her occupied, she enjoys reading.

She is a mom, grandma, and soon-to-be life coach, studying at New Insights. Her choice of study strongly relates to her ambition to help people find hope, unlock their potential, and realise their dreams. She values honesty and integrity in others and describes herself as caring, loyal, and a good listener. This is the perfect combination of characteristics for a life coach.

Upon losing her sight completely, she felt as if her independence was declining due to the inability to do certain things, such as driving. Even though feeling this way, she

learnt that she is still capable of many things, and her determination to contribute to society as a life coach, is evident in the way she presents herself.

Cole Baker



Cole is a Law student at the University of Stellenbosch and has a passion for music. He aspires to be a litigating attorney one day. “I want to consistently outperform myself and exceed my previous achievements. My definition of success entails a world where I have the privilege of sending my children to private education and taking my family on regular holidays.”

There is a growing demand for entrepreneurs in South Africa, and with the knowledge, he will gain from his studies, he will fight inequalities and equip the underprivileged with knowing the law.

“ Law presupposes a society and is inseparable from it; there will always be a need for lawyers and the law. What I aim to do with my degree is effect some social change, particularly in the field of disability law. “

Meaningful human interaction, cooking, playing chess and singing is but a few of his hobbies. One of the biggest lessons he learnt is to be gracious with himself and to be grateful for doing everything he can do independently, even though a little help is required sometimes.

Typhlotechnology, the eyes of blind people

Technological development has been key to social inclusion, however, awareness is still lacking to guarantee universal access



Antonio Sanjurjo (75 years old) has taken three buses to get from his home, in Boadilla del Monte (Madrid), to the Territorial Delegation of ONCE, in the center of the capital. He has had less than 10% vision in his left eye for three years, with his right eye long since gone. With practice and a mobile app that tells him bus times by voice, he has mastered this route.

Today he has another class with Elena Almazán, his instructor in typhlotechnology, who is teaching him how to get even more out of his mobile phone through the screen reader that smart devices already have built-in as standard. Both take a seat in one of the classrooms on the fifth floor of the ONCE building, the place where those who have lost vision below 10% join the organization free of charge and learn to adapt to their new life.

According to ONCE data, some 3,000 people annually –mainly over 60 years old–. First, they are given a psychological service, fundamental to accepting their disability, and then they are instructed in fundamental aspects such as mobility around the city or the use of typhlotechnology (from the Greek tiphlo, which means blind) or adapted technology.

“If it is already difficult for anyone to live without technology, in the case of those who suffer from visual impairment, it is what makes the difference between being autonomous or constantly depending on others,” explains Elena Almazán.

She is one of the many tiflotecnología instructors that ONCE has in all the Spanish provinces, the “tiflos”, as her students affectionately call them.

Its mission is to teach blind people to get along with typhlotechnology, either through keyboard shortcuts on the computer that allow them to navigate web pages and the rest of the device, or with smart and touch devices, with dozens of gestures of one, two, three and four fingers – five, even, in the case of tablets.

“Remember, Antonio, that with a long touch of two fingers, you silence the screen reader.

Now, do you remember how we used to go back to the applications menu?”, he tells his student. In this class, Antonio is learning how to download audiobooks from the ONCE library, which has more than 70,000 titles.

“I am an unrepentant reader”, he laughs, “and this was what I was most excited to learn”.

Typhlotechnology classes for adults are individual.

"Each person has a different level of learning and different needs," explains Almazán, who adds that it also depends on the use they are going to make of the technology, to work or study, for example.

“Age and previous experience with technology play a role.

For older people it may cost a little more, although there is everything.

On the other hand, in younger people much more dexterity is noticeable, ”says the instructor.

For the little ones, the introduction to the use of these adapted technologies is carried out collectively in the Educational Resource Centers of ONCE, in which they are provided with everything they need so that "they can be one more in the classroom of their school" .

Asier Vázquez (40 years old, Bilbao) remembers how his "tiflo" taught him to get along with the technology that was available almost three decades ago.

Although he was born with poor vision, until the age of 12 he could read with enlarged print.

In adolescence he completely stopped seeing.

“When you don't see anything is when you realize that technology is essential for practically everything,” Vázquez says in a telephone conversation.

“When I was little, there were things that made our lives a lot easier, like typewriters, braille notetakers.

How is technology adapted for people with visual impairments?

Elena Almazán has been working as a typhlotechnology instructor since 1993 and, in her opinion, the biggest technological revolution for visually impaired people has been screen readers and smartphones.

“The most important thing is that they are already integrated, regardless of the operating system.

In the past you had to buy a computer and, apart from that, the screen reader”, she explains.

Although technological innovation has been perfecting these programs, there are always models and versions that respond better than others.

ONCE lends its members one of the most advanced screen readers currently, Jaws, free of charge, which is used for both home and work positions, and whose market price is around 1,000 euros.

In the same way, when an ONCE member begins to work in a company that uses a specific computer program that does not have a typhotechnological option, the organization's technical staff adapts it.

In a digital world like today's, it is necessary to guarantee universal access to technology.

"The problem is that innovation does not always take into account people with visual disabilities," says José María Ortiz, head of the Department of Consulting and Innovation at the ONCE Center for Tiflotechnology and Innovation (CTI), a reference laboratory in Spain. and in the world –some technicians have collaborated with technological giants such as Microsoft–, located in Vallecas.

At the CTI, they work to reverse this situation and adapt the technology: "Sometimes they are very simple solutions, but they represent a tremendous change for the autonomy of blind people," says Ortiz, who gives the example of ceramic hobs.

"How can a blind person cook if the buttons are tactile?
It's quite complicated."

The CTI has created a template in relief from 3D printing and adapted to different models of glass-ceramic that allows the buttons to be located by touch.

Universal access to the Internet, a pending subject

The ONCE innovation center also collaborates with companies to develop other tiflotechnological solutions and evaluates the accessibility of websites and mobile applications at the request of its members.

"Among them, there are usually some of the most popular and useful ones, such as Amazon," explains Ortiz.

The CTI sends the results of its evaluation to the companies so that they can improve their accessibility if necessary.

In the case of web pages, Asier Vázquez already knows which ones he can easily access and navigate, and which ones he can't: "There are some that I don't even try because they've already told me that it's a headache or it's directly impossible, and I prefer to save myself the effort and the anger", he says.

Since 1999, the W3C (World Wide Web Consortium, a committee that implements uniform technologies in the use and development of the Internet) has published recommendations to make web pages accessible to all people, including those with some type of visual or hearing disability.

These web accessibility guidelines have been modified with the development of the Internet and included in international and national legislation, as explained by Sergio Luján, professor of Computer Languages and Systems at the University of Alicante. In Spain, the legislation dates back to the beginning of the 21st century and obliges Public Administrations to guarantee a minimum level of web accessibility, and subsequent revisions have also included private basic supply entities.

“These web pages must guarantee the second level of these guidelines –one of the three that exist– according to different criteria”, explains Luján.

“For example, that every image has a textual alternative so that the screen reader can describe it to a visually impaired person.

In the same way, the videos that a website contains must always show subtitles for deaf people.

You also have to take into account the contrast, the size of the letters and the icons...”, sums up Luján.

Two ways to read texts for people with a small percentage of vision. KIKE PARA However, there are still websites, such as the official website of Moncloa or that of Renfe Viajeros, among other examples, that do not guarantee the accessibility guidelines according to the legislation.

As Vázquez adds, another recurring problem is that many pages are only accessible on the main screen, but not on the rest.

"It's like putting a ramp to access a building and then everything inside is full of stairs," he claims.

Although there is a sanctioning system for the lack of web accessibility, "not many people report it because it has to start from a particular initiative and that implies knowledge on the subject and a lot of effort," explains Luján.

A 2018 European Union directive incorporated the need to contemplate these guidelines for web pages in their mobile versions, as well as applications, but, as Luján indicates, the updates to these technological accessibility guidelines and their transpositions into legislation countries are too far behind compared to how fast technologies are evolving.

"The Radar Covid app, without going any further, had many accessibility problems," the University of Alicante professor gives as an example.

In Spain there are almost a million people who suffer from some kind of visual disability, according to the latest Survey on Disability, Personal Autonomy and Dependency Situations, published by the National Institute of Statistics (INE) more than a decade ago.

Of these, more than 70,000 have visual impairment below 10%, as pointed out by ONCE.

Guaranteeing universal access is not costly if the web design or the development of mobile applications were originally carried out taking these guidelines into account, as Luján explains.

For this to happen, “more awareness is needed”, especially in this race to digitize the economy.

“In the political arena they keep repeating that digitization should not leave anyone behind, but,....

Source: [Elparis](#)

EarCatch



<https://earcatch.eu/about/>

HOW IT WORKS

Install the app on your smartphone or tablet. Select the film or series that you would like to watch and download the corresponding audio description. Put on your headphones and hit “play” when the film or series begins. Earcatch will synchronise the audio description with what appears on screen.

Have you heard?

Do you know what our two other trusts have been up to? No? Below is a reminder. Don't be shy, go ahead and support this cause.



Below is a short introduction to our 2 trusts:

The John and Esther Ellerman Trust

Vision:

To have mobility training available to all blind people in South Africa enabling the trainees to be integrated into their community and the sighted world at large, and open doors to job opportunities.

Mission:

To assist organisations of and for the blind, which are based throughout the country, in both city and rural areas to provide training which is adapted to suit the needs and locality of trainees. The assistance is in the form of a – subsidy enabling organisations to employ Orientation and Mobility Practitioners.

The Ian Fraser Memorial Bursary Fund

Vision:

To provide bursaries to blind and visually impaired persons enabling them to attend a FET or tertiary institutions of education.

Mission:

Assisting blind and visually impaired people financially enables them to further their studies.

Please visit our website, www.stdunstans.org.za to learn more.

To reach our goal, we will need a database of those who support this cause. We would greatly appreciate it if you could sign up for our Trusts Newsletter to keep you updated on all new developments and exciting news. You may use this link to sign up: [here](#)

Please also follow us on social media here: [here](#)

If it is not too much to ask, please share with friends and family, thank you.