

SA to receive electric braille machine in Feb

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17 Jan 2008

A new electric braille for visually impaired people will be available in the country in February, says the South African National Council for the Blind (SANCB).

The machine is made possible by a ten year international partnership between SANCB and the Perkins School in Boston, USA.

The partnership, called the Perkins Project, runs a factory in Killarney Gardens, Cape Town where the braille machines are assembled for distribution in South Africa, Africa and other developing countries.

The factory is supplying the braille machines at 40% cheaper than the imported machines.

SANCB Communication Manager, Lindie Sutherland told BuaNews that the electric braille machine will weigh less and users will not have to press the keys as hard as before.

A braille machine can be compared to a manual typewriter typing in tactile dots instead of ink.

The old machine consists of 756 parts and weighs 6.5 kilograms.

Sutherland said: "The partnership was established with a view to benefiting visually impaired people in the developing world by giving them access to an affordable way of writing Braille."

According to Sutherland, this was how the council's slogan, 'Empowering visually impaired persons to do what they dare to dream', was adopted.

The factory has since manufactured more than 20,000 braille machines in the past 10 years and by doing this, Sutherland said, it has empowered many blind people in the developing world to write braille and to, therefore, be literate.

The world-renowned Perkins braille machines have been manufactured since 1951 and are used in more than 170 countries.

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