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Official Newsletter of the World Blind Union Asia Pacific

“The Voice of the Blind and Visually Impaired in the Asia Pacific Region”

Please visit the World Blind Union Asia Pacific website!

www.wbuap.org

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Editorial

Hello everyone,

My name is Mary Schnackenberg. Please call me Mary. I am the new editor for East Wind and I have been asked to look after the WBUAP website as well. This is a privilege for me and I wish to especially thank those of you who had a hand in my appointment.

I live in Auckland, New Zealand, the same city as Martine Abel-Williamson who serves on the WBUAP Board and Policy Council. Our homes are about a 25 minute taxi ride apart. I am self employed and, with my partner Clive Lansink, I am a director of our small company, Accessible Information and Communications Ltd.

Among other things, I chair Article 33 New Zealand Convention Coalition Monitoring Group. We interview people with a disability and ask them about their daily lives. We write reports for our government on what we have learned from the interviews about how New Zealand is implementing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

I am secretary-treasurer of the Braille Authority of New Zealand Aotearoa Trust. I was very pleased to see that Malaysia intends to adopt the Unified English Braille code by 2017. In my life, before I became self employed, I was a librarian. If all our countries could ratify the Marrakesh Treaty it would be so much easier for us to increase the range of accessible format materials for all people who are blind or vision impaired.

This issue of East Wind has a variety of articles from China, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Korea, Papua New Guinea, Australia and New Zealand with updates on the Incheon Strategy and implementation of the Marrakesh Treaty. Literacy through braille is featured in the announcement of the 2016 Onkyo Essay Competition. There's information about the upcoming General Assembly of the World Blind Union, and more. Special thanks to each of you who contributed to this issue. Please feel free to get in touch with me about anything you read here. Feedback is welcome as it will help me improve your East Wind.

You're welcome to send this issue of East Wind to your colleagues and friends. If anyone wants to be added to the East Wind subscription list, please contact me.

The next issue of East Wind is due in July. Please send your contributions to me by the middle of June.

Incheon Strategy: time to make the right real “for real”

Michiko Tabata, President World Blind Union Asia Pacific, writes:

The Korean Society for the Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities (KSRPD), which functions as the secretariat of the Asia Pacific Disability Forum, organized and hosted the Civil Society Organisations (CSO) Working Conference on the Monitoring of the Incheon Strategy. This was attended by representatives coming from seven countries including Korea. They represent CSOs of the Asia Pacific Region that constitute the Working Committee on the monitoring and implementation of the

Incheon Strategy, which was set up with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), such as KSRPD itself, ASEAN Disability Forum, and ourselves, the World Blind Union Asia Pacific.

The Conference revealed the follow-up or monitoring of the implementation of the Incheon Strategy is way below the level we should have. Not many countries seem to have a government structure to promote the implementation. Some countries do have their national disability policy that mirror ideas of the Incheon Strategy, but not many.

This year, we will have the third session of the Working Committee under UNESCAP on the Incheon Strategy, but it seems that quite an amount of time has been spent on the procedural issues in the past meetings. The Conference in Korea called for a more active regional structure to monitor the implementation of the Incheon Strategy. It is not clear whether that will be materialized, but at least it shows how alarmed the group was.

The Conference also called for more active involvement of disabled people's organizations (DPOs) at national level, including WBUAP and Asian Blind Union (ABU) member organizations, to push for the implementation and the data collection. This is going to be crucial, since UNESCAP is going to accept reports from CSOs in addition to the member states, just like the parallel report of UNCRPD implementation.

So, dear members, please start getting really into the monitoring of the Incheon Strategy, to make the right real “for real”. It may not be achieved without your voice.

Editor's note

Here's a link to the Incheon Strategy www.unescapsdd.org/publications/incheon-strategy.

Marrakesh Treaty update

Progress Report in the Asia Pacific Region on the Marrakesh Treaty Ratification Campaign between July and December 2015 from Neil Jarvis

I wanted to give you a quick update on developments we're aware of since my last report to you in July 2015, and a lot has happened in that time.

In my last report, I signalled that three exciting developments had taken place in June: all of these came to fruition over the next few months, and we even had a few bonuses.

Mongolia ratified the Marrakesh Treaty, thus becoming the first of our four target countries to do so. Australia ratified the treaty as well, thereby making two of our four target countries. In both cases, work now begins to prepare the way for implementation. The Republic of Korea also ratified the treaty. This happened much sooner than we'd anticipated.

This means that, with Singapore, Mongolia, Korea and Australia, there are four countries in the Asia Pacific region which have now ratified the Marrakesh Treaty.

The joint project undertaken by WBUAP and the AP region of the UN Development Programme also achieved its first objective in early December. You will recall that this was a report into the legal capacity of selected countries in the region to ratify and implement the treaty. It will be a superb tool to assist us in our regional and national campaigns in 2016 and beyond. The press release announcing the publication of the report, along with a copy of the report itself in PDF and accessible format versions in electronic braille as well as DAISY and MP3 audio are all available.

We launched the report in a presentation at a regional workshop in Shanghai held from 15-17 December hosted by United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and China Federation of Disabled Persons entitled "the Accessible Knowledge, Information and Communication for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific". My PowerPoint presentation and talking points are also available on request.

We had a lot of interest following the presentation from government officials around the region, as well as from representatives of the Government in Bangladesh, which I will share with my opposite number in the Asian Blind Union.

At that workshop, a representative of the People's Republic of China Government in Beijing acknowledged the importance of the treaty and confirmed that discussions were taking place on ratification, but would not be drawn on a time-table. We were also asked for additional support on the campaign from a representative of the China Braille Press and from the China Federation of Disabled Persons.

In New Zealand, our cross-sector campaign for ratification has started to bear fruit. The Government has published a consultation document which asks for views about whether New Zealand should join the Marrakesh Treaty. There are three options: keep the status quo and don't join, join the treaty with minimum changes to existing legislation, or join the treaty with a few additional changes to domestic legislation which would make it more unequivocal that individual disabled people and their families would be able to make accessible copies of publications (something which existing legislation is at best ambiguous about). The Government has made it clear that it prefers the third option, but if it can't get agreement about that it would settle for the second; either way, there is a clear statement of intent by the Minister and his senior officials that ratification is the preferred way forward.

This consultation process will end on 26 February, after which a National Interest Analysis will be presented to Cabinet, with any necessary changes to the Copyright Act introduced to Parliament before ratification can happen. In New Zealand we are now reasonably confident that ratification will occur in 2016.

I am also assured that necessary changes to the copyright laws of Thailand are being discussed to allow Thailand to ratify in the not too distant future, so I expect that we will be hearing good news from that country in the coming year.

A taste of job opportunity: visually impaired barista in Hong Kong

CHONG Chan-yau, President, Hong Kong Blind Union, writes:

I am a coffee drinker without knowing how to make it. Not only do I enjoy coffee, I am deeply respectful of the rich meaning that coffee carries for humanity. For one thing, coffee bean production means livelihood for over 20 million farmers, mostly in developing countries, including South East Asia. Hong Kong Blind Union has enriched the story of coffee by proving that people with visual impairment can aspire to be barista.

A mission of Hong Kong Blind Union is to promote employment opportunities for people who are blind. Our new trial is to train up people with visual impairment to be Barista.

A barista is a person specially trained in making and serving of coffee drinks in a café. It seems to be an impossible job for visually impaired persons in the mind of many people. A big question mark also appeared in our mind when the Junior Chamber International Peninsula invited Hong Kong Blind Union as one of the supporting organizations to their “Baristas Training Programme for Visually Impaired People” launched in the summer of 2015. But we believe, “attempt is always the way to success”.

Seven visually impaired trainees were recruited to join the programme and took their first step to become a barista by attending a professional coffee training course, where they learnt and practiced coffee making skills with guidance from a professional trainer. They all passed the final assessment and were offered a short-termed placement at different cafés in order to put what they had learnt into practice.

After the training, Benny, one of the seven participants, started to work in a café as a barista trainee in September 2015 and another participant Simon was also employed in December.

“I remember a conversation between a couple and their child I heard in the café. The parents told the child how hard-working I am as a barista and they hope their child could take me as a role model in the future. I was so encouraged,” said Benny. This was an unforgettable experience to him. He never thought he could make a positive impact on the life of others while helping out in a café and handling the daily operation.

The Visually Impaired Baristas Training Programme has proved that visually impaired persons can go beyond the limitation caused by loss of eye sight and make a difference in society. Nothing is impossible. This Barista Training Programme not only created employment opportunities for visually impaired persons but, more importantly, it also aroused public awareness on the working capability of people with disabilities.

Social inclusion is not only a slogan but an action. We hope to see similar programmes developed in the future in Hong Kong and other places to benefit more people with visual impairment.

Voices of Pacific Children with disability

Over the past two years, Peter Wasape, a blind man from Papua New Guinea, has been involved in a ground breaking research project funded by Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

Peter, who is a member of PNG Blind Union, special country member of WBU, was trained by researchers at Deakin University including Kevin Murfitt, to conduct interviews with children with disability in PNG. More than 40 children including children who are blind or have low vision discussed their hopes and dreams for the future. This research was ground breaking because the researchers developed ways of talking directly to children about their human rights concerns and aspirations.

For example, Peter and his colleagues developed a 'Story in a Bag' which included tactile representations of everyday life such as books, miniature cars, buildings like a church, sporting items such as a cricket ball, food items such as a plastic banana and so on. These were given to children who are blind or have low vision. They touched and identified them, and then chose items that were important to them and discussed why.

Children with disability in PNG have similar dreams and hopes as other children to go to school, get a job, and be involved in family and community life. Unfortunately for many, they do not receive the support or access required to be included in these basic human rights others enjoy.

Peter and his colleagues have gained skills and experience that will assist them and groups like PNG Blind Union to talk to children about their needs and advocate for their human rights.

A fifteen minute audio-described film about the research can be viewed at: www.voicesofchildrenwithdisability.com

Visit 'down under' from Korea

Kevin Murfitt and Martine Abel-Williamson write:

A 12 member delegation from the Korean Blind Union (KBU) led by WBU AP Board and Policy Council Vice-President Sung-jun Ha visited Australia and New Zealand in November 2015.

On the first leg of the tour, the visitors were hosted by Vision Australia and spent three days learning about the range of services available to people who are blind or have low vision in Australia. Sung-jun introduced his Korean colleagues to Vision Australia CEO Ron Hooton, General Manager Stakeholder Engagement and immediate Past President of WBU, Maryanne Diamond, and Vision Australia past Chair and WBU AP Treasurer Kevin Murfitt.

The group learnt about information and library services, children's services, adaptive technology services, Vision Australia Radio, and alternate format production. On the second day the group visited the new multi-million dollar Seeing Eye Dog breeding and training centre meeting some puppies. They inspected the facilities such as hydra-baths for dog cleaning and injury recovery, and climate controlled kennels.

They were entertained for dinner on the banks of the Yarra river in Melbourne and had some time for shopping before setting off to New Zealand.

Over the following two days the Korean delegation visited blindness organisations in Auckland.

Their first stop was BLENNZ (Blind and Low Vision Education Network NZ). BLENNZ is a national school that provides a network of education services to about 1,500 children who are blind, deafblind or have low vision, some with additional and complex needs. Most of the children are mainstreamed into their local schools, supported by resource teachers vision who work for BLENNZ. BLENNZ has several campuses around New Zealand, their headquarters being at Homai in South Auckland which the Korean group visited. The Homai campus has the residential school which provides short and long term courses for students. The Kickstart programme, also on the Homai campus, prepares teenage school leavers for the big wide world of work and study, teaching a wide range of domestic and life skills.

The delegation next visited the Blind Foundation, New Zealand's main blindness service provider. They were shown adaptive technology, accessible format production and library services. They spent some time with the team of fundraisers.

Sung-Jun and colleagues met up with Martine Abel-Williamson, WBUAP Board and Policy Council member, to promote the Korean style of folding white cane.

On their second night in Auckland, a function was organised for them, attended by both Blind Citizens NZ (New Zealand's main consumer organisation) and the Blind Foundation. Sung-Jun and his colleagues were introduced to staff and board members of the Blind Foundation and the members of the Auckland Branch of Blind citizens NZ.

On their final afternoon there was time for a little more shopping. On their last night, Blind citizens NZ's Auckland Branch treated the Korean delegation to pizzas to make sure they got to try an informal 'Kiwi' take out dinner.

Sung-jun Ha from Korea Blind Union writes:

My colleagues and I visited Australia and New Zealand for a week last November. The objectives of the trip were to learn about Australia's National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and independent living services for visually impaired people. We looked for new information on new kinds of independent living services and observed the agencies and organizations working with persons who are blind or visually impaired. There were 12 of us in the group, five from Gyeongki Independent Living Services center for the Blind and seven from the Nowon Independent Living Services Center for the Visually Handicapped.

The most impressive experience in New Zealand was a donation programme at the Blind Foundation through written wills. It was quite a surprise to us because most Koreans would think their properties should be handed to their own sons and daughters again and again. Because of this, the law of inheritance tax in Korea has a tendency to secure ancestors' right for reserve. In fact, the law enacts that legal portion of reserve is more than half of the properties. However, many donors in New Zealand give legacies to social services agencies or organizations working for public interests. The Blind Foundation is also collecting many donations from the donors

through their wills. We could take some information from the website and discussion with the staff working in Blind Foundation. Active discussions were evolved in our group and we could understand the following things.

First of all, donation is not common sense yet in Korea although it is socially honourable behavior. Many Koreans would say that donations can be made by the rich or that the donation systems in Korea might not be clear even though many systems and laws relating to donations have been improved for over twenty years. Moreover, some ancestors should not have agreed with their parents who hoped to donate their properties after death. The reason that ancestors cannot agree to do so is that they cannot maintain their lives of quality by their own incomes. This is because real average income from labour in Korea has slowly diminished during the past five years. Domestic prices for almost all aspects of services and goods are increasing and social services such as child care, public education, aged care ETC are insufficient. Lack of social services causes many Koreans to pay much money for them.

After visiting the Blind Foundation, we have homework to introduce the donation system they use. We need to learn our Korean laws and regulations on inheritance and the writing of wills, attempt to make an agenda for the donation programme through written wills, and distribute the programme in Korea.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) in Australia is the most curious assignment to us because only personal assistant service for independent living has been based on voucher system in Korea. Other services such as orientation and mobility training, daily living skill training and so on are based on agencies (service providers). The agencies are operated by organizations or welfare foundations but their budgets are given from local or central governments. Therefore, Korean systems may be centered not in consumers but on providers; may not be based on needs; and may be easily evolved by service providers rather than consumers.

On the other hand, NDIS in Australia or individualized funding in New Zealand are a comprehensive and multi-faceted assistance system to enhance the quality of life of people with a disability. They are focusing on consumers, based on personal needs and system operators may have interests in the voice of consumers.

Lastly, I cannot help mentioning about warm and favorable welcome and farewell, and accommodations from Vision Australia, Blind Citizens New Zealand and Blind Foundation. I am extremely appreciative of your cordial hospitality while we visited your countries.

Some early intervention for blind children in China

Mary Ma writes from Beijing:

What a burden visual impairment is to the individual, the family and the society! But my own experience also tells me and proves to all that the value a person who is blind creates for her family and the society far exceeds the burden. Regretfully, my personal discovery has not made any real impact on my partners, the parents of visually impaired children. I wonder what has so affected the opinion of my partners on the value of their blind children. If a child could not be treated equally in his or her

own family and truly involved into the family environment, what other resources can this child use to build their confidence to interact with people and society?

The only problem with children who are vision impaired is that they can't see the world with their eyes, but they still have other senses. As long as the parents can help their child observe the world by using senses other than vision, create a good family environment and enough space for their child to explore, and let their hand touch every detail in their daily life, the child could grow up as everyone else does, be involved in society and create value for themselves, for the family and the whole society as well.

According to 2010 data from China Disabled People Federation, there are about 136,000 blind children under the age of six in mainland China. Although early intervention is especially important to children who are blind for their further development, there are very few organizations focusing on this work.

Seven Color Flower (SCF) is a pilot project aiming to serve and prepare blind children with necessary early development and living skills for future life, through online consultation and offline activities that interact with and help families with blind children. It was launched on 6 January 2012 by Mary Ma, a blind woman who lost her eyesight at an early age. Seven Color Flower means a bright future, as everyone should receive an early education for a better start in life. SCF are focusing on blind children under six years of age who are living with their families.

In 2015, SCF had enquiries from 24 provinces and provided consultation services to 55 more children who are blind. So far we have served around 110 blind children, 65 per cent of whom are boys. Through different online consulting and training courses and offline activities, such as home visits, SCF tried to build the connections among parents of children who are blind and professional experts. With this help, parents learned how to observe and lead their child to see the outside world, develop living and moving skills and prepare for further learning. SCF's plan for 2016 will still focus on what we are doing now, to work with responsible early intervention organizations to increase beneficiary numbers. We will try to connect experts and international practitioners to target families and blind children.

SCF received donations and volunteer support to successfully accomplished 2015. For 2016, we are seeking RMB20000 (which is around US\$3000) to support the coming activities and consulting services.

We welcome any organization interested in early intervention for children who are blind or vision impaired to contact us! Email address: 149861036@qq.com

Access to the environment and transport forum

The Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand, World Blind Union, Auckland Council (the city's local authority) and the Blind Foundation Guide Dog Services are running a forum on access to the environment and transport in Auckland, New Zealand, from 13 to 15 April 2016.

The forum is looking at access to the environment and transport from the perspective of blind, vision impaired, deafblind and people who have low vision. There will be key

stakeholders present from government, and local and international blindness organisations.

Topics under discussion will include:

- design of shared spaces;
- update on quiet car issues;
- universal design principles; and
- accessible international travel with a particular focus on how to improve access to travelling with a guide dog (or seeing eye dog as many Americans call them).

Site visits to shared spaces in Auckland will be arranged. A shared space is where pedestrians and vehicles share a specially designed city street. The right design makes sure vehicles travel slowly and people who are blind can move about safely.

There will also be an opportunity to brainstorm future environmental and transport access issues and initiatives.

For more information, contact Martine Abel-Williamson :

martine.abel@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz.

WBUAP 13th Regional Massage Seminar 4-6 May, 2016

The Philippine Blind Union Inc. and the National Council on Disability Affairs Philippines are hosting the WBUAP 13th Regional Massage Seminar to be held in Manila, Philippines, from 4-6 May, 2016.

The theme of the seminar is “maximizing skills, technologies and opportunities for economic empowerment”. The seminar aims to push for the inclusion of massage in the regional economic framework.

The registration fee is US\$265 per participant and US\$220 for accompanying persons or personal assistants. The deadline for registrations is 31 March 2016. All participants are asked to arrive on 3 May.

For more details on the seminar, registration and payment procedures, please visit the website at www.wbuap13thrms.org/.

2016 Onkyo Braille Essay Contest: good news!

We are pleased to announce the Onkyo Corporation and the Braille Mainichi of Japan have again agreed to sponsor the Contest for the 14th time this year.

As usual, there will be one overall prize, the Otsuki Prize of US\$1,000 from groups A & B, between the ages of 14 - 25 & 26 upwards respectively. And there are three other prizes each for the two age groups.

Whilst Onkyo Corporation and the Braille Mainichi are very appreciative of the participation thus far, they have expressed the hope that more countries would join, particularly from China, Korea, Fiji, et cetera. This is their contribution to the promotion of braille literacy in the World Blind Union.

Please look out for the circular to be sent out by the Secretary General in early February. In the meantime, you can start forming your National Onkyo Selection Committee (NOSC), comprising three to five members. The duties of the NOSC are to encourage participation and select the best five entries to be submitted to WBUAP, according to the rules to be sent out shortly.

Onkyo Essay competition winners from Australia

Blind Citizens Australia (BCA), the national peak body for people who are blind or vision impaired, announced on 16 December 2015, there were two Australian winners in the Onkyo Braille Competition, an international essay contest for Braille users across the Asia Pacific region.

David Kovacic, 55, of Ocean Grove in Victoria, won the Otsuki Prize for the overall competition winner, with a score of 76.5 per cent for his essay about the many adventures he's had since losing his vision and hearing. David writes about "reclaiming his life" by taking up surfing, metal detecting, kayaking and driving a racing car.

Vanessa Vljakovic, an 18 year old student from Dianella in Western Australia, wrote about whether Braille is still relevant in our age of technology, taking out the Excellence Prize for Category A (14 – 25 year olds) with a score of 73.6 per cent. Vanessa argued, as a young person with sight and hearing loss, she needs Braille to be able to use technology such as Facebook. With a Braille display attached to her computer, she is able to keep in touch with friends in the same way as any other teenager.

"We're delighted to see braille literacy thriving through the Onkyo Competition, and thrilled to have two Australian winners in the year in which BCA is hosting the competition," said Emma Bennison, BCA President.

"It's critical to have positive role models for braille literacy like David and Vanessa in the Australian blindness community at a time when educators and the broader community can struggle to understand that there's no substitute for knowing how you spell a word or how you punctuate a sentence. Computer software that reads out text just can't give you the same completeness of information that braille offers."

Audio description in New Zealand

What's audio description?

In film, television, live theatre and other events, a trained narrator describes to blind listeners visual events not explained in the dialogue. The audio describer speaks in the pauses between dialogue and does not talk over important sounds such as music that are part of the event. In the article, 'An introductory walk to George Town's heritage' in East Wind No. 16, audio description was described as "sight made verbal".

There's not enough space in this article to talk about the equipment used, but more information can be provided when you contact us.

Nicola Owen writes:

Since the first audio described performance in 2010, New Zealand has begun to develop a vibrant and diverse audio description scene across the country. In 2011 audio description was launched on New Zealand television, and a group of audio describers were trained by Auckland Live to provide description for live performances.

Nicola Owen, one of the audio describers trained in 2011 at Auckland Live, is keen to extend the use of audio description to ensure people who are blind or vision impaired have an opportunity to participate in the broader cultural life of New Zealand. In addition to audio describing live theatre, musicals, opera, chamber music, children's shows, awards ceremonies, and circus, her company, Audio Described Aotearoa Ltd, has also led tours of museums, galleries, gardens and festivals, and developed written descriptions of printed and visual materials including conference presentations and floor plans.

A highlight of 2015 was providing audio description for the ANZAC Day Dawn Service at the Auckland War Memorial Museum. Across New Zealand and Australia each year on ANZAC Day we pause to remember those who have lost their lives while on military service for both countries. The services are quiet, respectful and often very moving. As the earpieces the blind listeners wear cannot be heard by others, the audio describer was able to explain what the participants were doing without disturbing the respectful quiet. Several of the adults who are blind had not previously been to an ANZAC Day commemoration because they could not easily know what was happening. The audio describer enabled participation by people who are blind last year.

With support from Arts Access Aotearoa, Nicola helped to train audio describers in Wellington and Christchurch. In 2016, there will be audio described performances at both the Wellington and Auckland Arts Festivals, and audio described Chamber music in Auckland, Christchurch and Wellington. In addition to the described tours provided by the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa in Wellington, organisations like Auckland Art gallery and Auckland Botanic Gardens are also taking the opportunity to think about how to provide services for visitors who are blind or have low vision.

Nicola is keen to take up the challenge of describing ballet and the busker festival in the future, but knows the importance of taking people with her. "The key thing is to get people who are blind and arts and culture organisations talking to each other to build audience confidence and make audio description successful in the long term," says Nicola.

World Blind Union Membership Fees Deadline

Members are reminded that the deadline for the payment of WBU membership fees in 2016 is 31 March 2016. The WBU e-Bulletin January 2016 tells us that this date is so that these can be fully settled prior to the opening of the General Assembly. Please remember that membership fees are to be paid in US dollars (USD); not in

Canadian dollars (CAD). There is approximately a 40 per cent differential in the exchange rate between the USD and the CAD, so if you pay your fees in Canadian dollars, you will have an outstanding balance of 40 per cent and will be considered not financial.

Only members that are fully financial for the full quadrennial will be eligible to have voting delegates at the upcoming General Assembly.

WBU-ICEVI Joint Assembly Registration Now Open!

The National Federation of the Blind (NFB) is pleased to announce that registration is now open for the World Blind Union (WBU) and the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI) Joint Assembly.

The WBU/ICEVI Joint Assembly, hosted by NFB of the USA, will take place in Orlando, Florida, USA from 18 - 25 August 2016 at the beautiful Rosen Centre Hotel. The WBU/ICEVI Joint Assembly will give the WBU, ICEVI, and all of their members the opportunity to share important information, knowledge, and best practices while promoting even greater collaboration among blind individuals, organizations of the blind, service providers, and other stakeholders at the global level.

To register, click on the following link: www.wbu-icevi2016.org. Please note that registration for the WBU/ICEVI General Assembly is only available online. Registration will close on 1 June 2016.

Mark A. Riccobono, President of the National Federation of the Blind, said: "We are excited and proud to host the first World Blind Union General Assembly to be held in the United States. Hosting this important meeting of the world's blind is a natural step for us, as our founder, Dr. Jacobus tenBroek, also helped found the International Federation of the Blind, and we have sought to improve the lives of the blind throughout the world by participating in international efforts ever since. We look forward to meeting our fellow advocates from many nations and to finding opportunities to collaborate on various projects and initiatives, so that all members of the global blind community can live the lives they want."

The registration website features information on a number of important topics, including:

- Joint Assembly information
- Registration details
- Accommodation
- Airport transportation
- Exhibitor information
- Destination information – such as information on Orlando and the surrounding area, typical local weather in August, and tourist information
- Travel information – such as information on visa requirements, medical insurance, guide dogs, vaccinations (Yellow Fever), and traveling with medications

The registration website does not feature General Assembly documents. Please visit the WBU and/or ICEVI websites for specific General Assembly documents. Follow this link to the WBU General Assembly page:

www.worldblindunion.org/English/general-assembly/Pages/default.aspx

Follow this link to the ICEVI General Assembly page:

<http://icevi.org/wbu.htm>

The WBU e-Bulletin January 2016 features a large section on the upcoming General Assembly.

Passing of Mr Ron Chandran-Dudley

At the close of 2015, we received the news of the death of Mr Ron Chandran-Dudley.

A blind businessman who lived in Singapore, Mr Chandran-Dudley became well known across the Asia Pacific in the early 1980s. He was one of the key disability activists who decided to break away from Rehabilitation International to form Disabled Peoples' International when RI refused to elect an equal number of people with disabilities to the RI World Council at their World Assembly in June 1980 in Winnipeg, Canada. He was a key member of the movement away from the medical rehabilitation model of disability to the social movement of people with a disability making their own decisions about their lives. In 1984, he attended a conference in Poland and brought back to Asia Pacific the then Polish war cry of "nothing about us without us".

May he rest in peace.

Change of address National Council for the Blind Malaysia

NCBM has moved to new premises as of January 2016. Their new contact details are:

The National Council for the Blind, Malaysia
Unit 13-8, Menara Sentral Vista,
150 Jalan Sultan Abdul Samad,
Brickfields,
50470 Kuala Lumpur,
Malaysia.

Tel. +60 (3) 2276 2973

Fax: +60 (3) 2276 1653

Email: info@ncbm.org.my

Editorial Team contact details

Mary Schnackenberg

2/13 Upland Road
Remuera
Auckland 1050
New Zealand
Email: mary@aicomms.co.nz

Wong Yoon Loong

The National Council for the Blind, Malaysia
Unit 13-8, Menara Sentral Vista,
150 Jalan Sultan Abdul Samad,
Brickfields,
50470 Kuala Lumpur,
Malaysia
Email: wongyl@ncbm.org.my

Dr. Issavara Sirirungruang

Ratchasuda College, Mahidol University
111 Moo 6, Phuttamonthon 4 Road,
Salaya, Nakhon Pathom 73170,
Thailand.
Email: isvrss@gmail.com, issavara.sir@mahidol.ac.th

Helen Freris

c/o International Social Service Australia
Level 2
313/315 Flinders Lane
Melbourne, VIC 3000
Australia
Email: hfreris@tpg.com.au

Kylie Bauer

The Royal Society for the Blind
254 Angas Street
Adelaide, SA 5000
Australia
Email: Kylie.Bauer@rsb.org.au