

East Wind No. 18

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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

There's a lot happening in WBUAP member countries and across the region as you will see from this issue of East Wind. Some items were too long to carry in full in East Wind so they have been put on the WBUAP website with brief introductions to them in this issue.

We begin with a heart warming story from a guide dog user in China. We learn about developments in Myanmar, Mongolia, Tonga and Hong Kong. Several conferences and other projects are reported on in the section about the region, with an update on the Marrakesh Treaty.

Next month from Thursday 18 to Thursday 25 August is the joint assemblies of the World Blind Union (WBU) and the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI). They are being held in Orlando, Florida, in the USA. Please watch our website for news about our region as it breaks during the WBU General Assembly.

Issue No. 19 of East Wind will come out in early October. Please send your items to Mary Schnackenberg by Friday 16 September 2016.

Issue no. 20 of East Wind is due out in early January. Please send your items to Mary by Friday 16 December 2016.

Mary's email address is mary@aicomms.co.nz.

How Sherry changed my life

Lin Yan, writing from Shen Yang in China tells us:

It was April, 2010. After two years of anxious waiting, Sherry, a guide dog graduating from the China Guide Dog Training Center in Dalian, finally came to my side. Since then my life has never been the same.

I am a blind woman from Shenyang, a big city in northeast China. My name is Yanlin. I lost my sight at the age of 12, due to failure in eye surgery. Parting with painting and dancing, I went to study in a blind school. Knowledge and encouragement from parents rekindled my passion for life. However, the sudden death of my beloved father in 2009 thrust me into darkness once again. Sherry's presence lit up my world and I became more willing to go out and explore. Some say that one's favorite dog in this present life is a lost family member from the previous life. Indeed, Sherry is more of a faithful partner and is as close to me as family.

I still remember the first trip with her. My heart nearly came to my throat but I quickly got reassured by her professionalism in reminding me of steps, road corners and obstacles. My trust in, and dependence on her gradually increased.

Like other well-trained guide dogs, Sherry becomes calm and focused when the head collar is put on. Approaching bumps or trenches, she pauses to warn me. At intersections, she waits for instruction. Bikes and cars at the roadsides can also be successfully bypassed.

With Sherry as my guide, I can walk steadily with confidence. Mutual company also deepened her trust in me.

One day I was working on my computer at home, with Sherry sleeping at my feet. Suddenly she woke up, ran under the bed, and returned to me with her leash in her mouth. Thinking that she had just got bored, I put back the leash and continued my work. Sherry didn't give up and repeated the action, so I accepted her offer. The moment we were out of the house, she ran like the wind to a pit under the tree. I then realized that she had learned to "go potty" and a deep sense of happiness arose from within. Our mutual affection grew over time. I bathed her, brushed her teeth, cut her nails and got her vaccinated. Her personal items were all disinfected by me. Because of Sherry, I mastered cooking and got used to rise early. Doing all those things for her, I felt needed and fulfilled.

Whether I am poor or rich, healthy or ill, annoyed or desolate, Sherry treats me the same way. She is a good listener, a wonderful partner and great friend through thick and thin.

Accompanied by Sherry, I have attended an International Maternal and Infant Health Care Forum, been on the TV show of China Central Television, taken part in Chinese people's political consultative conference in Shenhe, Shenyang, and won various accolades. Without her, I would never have been able to pick myself up, grow strong or participate in society as an equal. Sherry is an indispensable part of my life, she is everything to me.

News from WBUAP member countries

Myanmar National Association of the Blind

Ms. Kwai Nan, the Project coordinator, has shared with us a celebration and workshops that took place last December. By raising awareness, there have been real benefits for some blind and vision impaired people.

Celebrating International Day of Disabled Persons 2015 in local branch Sagaing Division

A local branch manager and her committee members at the Myanmar National Association of the Blind (MNAB) successfully lobbied their social welfare department in Sagaing division for funding to celebrate the International Day of Disabled Persons last December. Another local NGO The leprosy Mission Myanmar (TLMM) was also successfully approached for funding support.

They had four clear objectives. These were:

- To raise the voices of blind and partially-sighted people to the notice of government officials and the community;
- to share knowledge about the International Day of Disabled Persons among blind and partially-sighted people to let them know about their rights;
- to raise the capacity of blind and partially-sighted people to stand as role models among their peers; and
- to extend the role and services of MNAB to the blind and partially-sighted living around the country.

With the funding and objectives worked out, MNAB decided to hold the celebration in the branch office compound. They invited 30 blind and partially-sighted people (all men) and their helpers from seven townships near to Monywa City to be more convenient for travel. They also invited township authorities from five townships to attend the celebration.

The day prior to the International Day of Disabled Persons there was an event held by the school for the blind in Monywa City. There were competition items of sport, singing, debating, drama and so on. The audients then moved to the MNAB branch office compound in the evening. The celebration started at 6pm. The items involved an introduction to the work of MNAB, a special talk about the International Day of Disabled Persons, and the press release by the World Blind Union. Prizes were awarded to outstanding capable persons from within the invited townships. MNAB also gave an award of congratulations to the school for the blind for their efforts in establishing services for blind and partially-sighted youngsters in the region succeeding as a self-help organization, without any support from government. The evening ended with music performed by the blind school music band.

Outstanding awards were given for home business, agriculture and life stock, running own massage center, good masseur, Myanmar traditional massage therapist level, and a musician skillful in local music.

On 3 December, the International Day of Disabled Persons, MNAB brought all the invited participants together with people from the school for the blind to the city hall for the celebration. The city holder gave an opening speech, Ministry of Social welfare in the region delivered a keynote address, and the division holder read out the International Day of Disabled Persons message from the United Nations Secretary-General. The host served light food refreshments after the ceremony. Everyone left with feeling happy, with good thoughts, and motivation returning to to their home village at the end of the day.

There were some great outcomes from these two days.

A blind seven-year-old boy, who lives in Monywa City now has the chance for schooling. His parents had been reluctant to send their son to school. MNAB extended an invitation for the father and son to attend the celebrations. The father realized the benefit of achieving education for his son from what he learned and his son has been attending the school for the blind since the beginning of this year.

Two adult blind people contacted the branch office saying they wanted to learn braille and massage. They have been passed on to the appropriate learning center.

Social Welfare will continue to celebrate the International Day of Disabled Persons with a change in government policy for the better.

The Minister of Social Welfare was interested in the MNAB event and has been given information about it.

We can show up township authorities our follow up actions after collecting data. They become able to trust the work of MNAB.

Workshops for older blind people

With some funds unspent from the 3 December event, MNAB was able to run some half-day workshops at the end of December for blind and partially-sighted adults between the ages of 20 and 40. The goal was to have fellowship among peers and to find out about their abilities and offer support.

The MNAB local branch office ran the program. They invited middle aged blind and partially-sighted people from Monywa Township and Sa Lin Gyi Township.

The workshop for Monywa Township was organized on 28 December at the blind school meeting hall. 15 blind and partially-sighted people and their assistants joined in. One village holder attended as an assistant of a blind person in his village. He is really remarkable for taking care of two blind and mentally retarded orphan siblings in his village. Committee members and students from the blind school also attended. A newspaper and TV journalist also came.

The workshop began with introductions. There were four ladies and 11 men. They described their current living situations, their wishes, and hobbies. One was a handicraft worker, repairing bicycles at home. Another was a musician, playing Myanmar instrument. There was one masseur, and another has a betel nut shop. The others lived with their families.

MNAB explained its role and tasks. There was discussion about the rights-based view on disability, the national law on the rights of the disabled, the ongoing process of Social welfare department for issuing disability identity cards, showing a video clip of role models, five blind people receiving training, and earning their own income. Participants were helped to draw up an action plan to provide them with brush up training to be professional in their respective fields and support them to reach the learning center for those ambitious to learn braille and vocational techniques. The women in the group do not see the possibility of their self-promoting.

The workshop for Sa Lin Gyi was conducted on 29 December. We have received much collaboration and support from this township since we started a data collecting task. The Deputy Township holder and police officer attended the opening session. The police officer gave the welcoming speech.

On behalf of MNAB, the Township office invited 24 blind and partially-sighted people, seven of whom with their assistants came. They were all men. One gentleman attended on behalf of his son. We ran the same program as in Monywa Township. A journalist from the National Newspaper also came.

Again there were great outcomes.

The gentleman decided to permit his son to go to school. He has offered to help MNAB run more workshops around the region.

Two of the men decided to go to the learning center. One 43-year-old said “ I feel like I've won a lottery. This is very first time in my life being invited as a human being. Get experience to participate in a group event.”

Another man is participating in a leading role in his village affairs. He became interested to joining development work for blind and partially-sighted people in his region.

News of our workshop appeared on the national government newspaper on 30 December.

We at MNAB and blind and partially-sighted people in Sagaing division are really benefiting from this small scale funding support. It makes the way to proceed finding potential leaders and training them up to carry on making their rights real.

Reviewing the beneficiaries indicate that the ladies are hidden and are not entitled to their rights and taking up opportunities.

Mongolia

Special thanks to Oyuntugs Bayaraa for these news items. But first, a little about her.

My name is Oyuntugs but call me Oyut which is easier to say. I am from the Mongolian National Federation of the Blind.

I am totally blind in my right eye with 9 percent sight in my left one. I walk each day to my office with my beautiful white cane in my hand. I am responsible for sharing with our partners articles about MNFB's highlights and what we are doing. Last summer I had the opportunity to meet most of you in Mongolia and I am very pleased to be able to greet you once more through my writing.

What is new around the legal environment for persons with disabilities?

Mongolia is now transcending from a social welfare system to a human rights based approach. For the first time we now have a law of Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This was written with the active participation of the representatives of persons with disabilities.

The content of the new law differs much from the former social welfare law with initiatives to build an accessible environment in educational and employment institutions, simultaneously supporting independent living skills. Another step is the establishment of the Council of Persons with Disabilities under the ministries of Education and Labour and Metropolitan. Implementation of the law is now in the state budget.

The Mongolian National Federation of the Blind is taking a lead role in cooperating with the government agencies by reinforcing the power of unity for all persons with disabilities.

Elections

Blind and visually impaired people of Mongolia are able to cast their votes in the upcoming national elections using braille ballot papers.

The Mongolian Federation of the Blind has printed braille ballot papers. We have assigned our partially sighted volunteer students as observers in the polling booths. The national law of the rights of persons with disabilities allows our members to vote either by having assistance from their legal caregivers or by using their braille

literacy and the braille ballot papers. Blind people are able to participate in making changes in their own country's future and their own lives.

13th Massage Seminar

Representatives of the Mongolian National Federation of the Blind managerial team and massage teachers successfully attended the 13th WBUAP Massage Seminar in Manila, Philippines at the beginning of May.

First of all, we would like to express our warm appreciation to all the members, delegates and masseurs from different parts of the world. The seminar was rich with insights and innovative ideas. The best practices introduced by the delegates were something to bear in mind for further development of blind massage in Mongolia.

To be certified to work in medical institutions it is good to have constant work places but, on the other hand, it requires a lot of responsibility for human health and life.

Vocational Training and Enterprise Centre

The Mongolian National Federation of the Blind has extended its Rehabilitation Training Centre as a Vocational Training and Enterprise Centre of the Blind in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour.

In the 2016-2017 academic year, we can take more than 60 students in the classes of relaxing massage, therapeutic massage, talking computers, sound effect operators and the traditional music of the horse-headed fiddle.

In addition to the vocational classes, there are basic classes of disabled sport, English, communication and entrepreneurship.

With the magic of the computer program Goodfeel 3.2 our amateur musicians are able to professionally play the melodies with musical scores translated into braille music. When Cake Talking Sonar is integrated with accessible equipment, our blind musicians will be able to compose and record their music.

However there are many things left to improve.

Special kindergarten

Mongolian blind and low vision children are now able to take preschool education because of an innovative programme of the Mongolian National Federation of the Blind. MNFB has been able to take advantage of a possibility allowed by the government. Our Parliament adopted the law of baby-sitting and MNFB successfully lobbied to increase the amount paid per disabled child.

Helped by this increased subsidy for disabled children, plus some of our own resources, we have been able to open a specially designed kindergarten. Safety, accessibility and friendliness are the features of this new kindergarten which was officially opened welcoming 19 children on 9 May 2016. The parents are free to go out and find jobs knowing their youngsters have a brighter future.

We know there's much more to do to improve our kindergarten – for instance accessible developmental toys, universal accessible interior, human resource capacity building and more.

We want to let our blind and vision impaired children lead a better life through early development!

“Helping Blind Children”

This is a handbook dedicated to nurturing the general development of blind and severe low vision babies and children from 0 to 6 years.

Because Mongolia has ratified the Marrakesh Treaty, MNFB can translate the whole handbook and give it to parents, kindergarten teachers, social workers and all those who will be working to set habits in our children's daily independent lives.

However all the simple tips included in the handbook sound too obvious and there should be no need to mention them. Why are parents still not aware of the “To Dos” for their blind children, delaying their core developmental stages?

Braille printer training

Thanks to the pleasant cooperation of Index Braille Malaysia and Sweden, Braille Edotor Ms. Tsend has completed her studies at a workshop of braille printer maintenance, service and adjustment held in Malaca, Malaysia. MNFB now has a certified braille printer technician. We have enormous gratitude for the support from Mrs. Anna, Executive director of Index Braille Malaysia and Mr. Bionne, Founder of Index Braille Sweden.

Tonga

Margaret Swift writes:

Mr Ofeina Leka has begun teaching two boys, Nicolosi aged 19 and Sio aged 20. Both boys were born blind and it was thought they could not learn so no one tried to teach them.

Ofeina has taught them to shower and toilet themselves, and to feed and dress themselves. Once a week he takes them out walking with canes which they love. Both boys were able to speak but were not very vocal. However since Ofeina has had them boarding with him during the week, both boys have started communicating and enjoy each other's company. They go home to their families each weekend and return each Monday morning. It is a joy to see how far these boys have come since the Tongan National Vision Impairment has begun teaching them independent living skills.

In April my husband and I helped take them on a picnic to the beach. It was the first time Sio had been in the water and he sat and let the waves break against his back. He enjoyed it so much he was shrieking with laughter with every wave that broke on his back.

Tonga National Vision Impairment is now an NGO but as yet it still lacks finance to be able to run more extensive courses training more people. Until they have computers, Ofeina cannot start computer training. We live in hope of the situation changing.

Hong Kong

Appointment of new Executive Director Hong Kong Blind Union

Chong Chan Yau, President of the Hong Kong Blind Union writes:

I wish to inform you that Ms. Stella HO has resigned from the position of Executive Director with effect from 1 April 2016. With her perseverance and strong belief in the self-help movement led by the visually impaired community, Stella has brought many new things to the Union, including but not limited to the setting up of a social enterprise and the e-book services. We wish her and her family all the best wholeheartedly!

I also wish to take this opportunity to welcome Mr. Brian WONG, our new Executive Director, coming on board on 29 March 2016. Brian has a background in social work and law and he has previously worked in various NGOs and statutory bodies, the Hong Kong Government and the United Nations. I am sure Brian will bring new insights to achieve the mission and vision of the Union with the joint efforts and continued support from members of the Executive Committee, as well as our members, colleagues, volunteers and work partners. Brian can be reached by email brianwong@hkbu.org.hk or by phone +852-2339-0666.

Last but not least, I wish to thank all of you for your unfailing support to the Hong Kong Blind Union over the past years!

WBUAP region activities

Plan of Action for Development of Youth

This Plan of Action for Development of Youth with Visual Impairment in the Asia Pacific region was adopted from the 1st Asia-Pacific Visually Impaired Youth Summit held in Penang, Malaysia from 7-9 August 2015. The summit was organized by the Society of the Blind in Malaysia in collaboration with the National Council for the Blind Malaysia, the Japan Braille Library and World Blind Union - Asia Pacific. This summit brought together 92 participants from 15 countries in the Asia Pacific Region.

The Plan of Action for Development of Youth with Visual Impairment in the Asia Pacific region is developed by grounding all its measures on the following fundamental principles:

- Individuals' rights and responsibilities;
- Mutual respect;
- Person-centered approach;
- Accessibility;
- Gender equality and gender sensitive;
- Partnership;

To read the full Plan of Action, go to the WBUAP website at <http://wbuap.org/index/archives/893>.

ASEAN Disability Forum (ADF) Conference 2015

Wong Yoon Loong writes:

In conjunction with Malaysia as the Chairman of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 2015, the National Council for the Blind of Malaysia (NCBM) was actively involved in the organising of the ASEAN Disability Forum through the Malaysian Confederation of the Disabled (MCD) from 19-21 October 2015 at the Istana Hotel, Kuala Lumpur. There were 300 participants from all ten ASEAN countries and Australia, Belgium, Germany, Japan and the USA.

Y.B. Dato' Rohani Abdul Karim, Minister of Women, Family and Community Development officiated at the opening ceremony and gave the keynote speech. There were three plenary sessions and eight concurrent workshops.

At the closing ceremony of the forum, the participants gave a statement containing 20 recommendations to Y.B. Dato' Azizah Mohd Don, Deputy Minister of Women, Family and Community Development. The full statement is on the WBUAP website at <http://wbuap.org/index/archives/890>.

WBUAP Women's Network Report, April 2016

Martine Abel-Williamson writes:

The highlight over the last year was most definitely the hosting by the Korean Blind Women's Union (KBWU) of an Asia-Pacific Women's Forum, held from 29 October to 1 November 2015.

KBWU generously sponsored participation of blind representatives from the following countries: New Zealand, Mongolia, Japan, The Philippines, China and Vietnam. Women's contacts from other countries were approached but not all were able to attend.

I was invited to deliver two presentations. The first was on how to work towards rights realisation for blind women in our region (in my role as WBUAP Regional CRPD Co-ordinator). The second presentation was on blind women's issues and status in New Zealand. For the second presentation I provided the audience with information on activities and programmes by NZ VIEW (Vision Impaired Empowering Women) and the Disabled Women's Forum. The latter is a women's group, established in Auckland and hosted by CCS Disability Action. My employer, Auckland Council, has been supporting this group over the past three years in terms of capacity building and event sponsorship around activities on 8 March, international Women's Day.

As Chair of the WBUAP Women's Committee, I agreed to look into linking disabled women's related websites and home pages, creating an email discussion group for blind women in our region, checking out an online chat room facility such as QQ or Talking Communities for blind women to stay in touch with one another.

While I was in Seoul, I was invited to visit the offices of Women striving for a Brighter Tomorrow (WSBT), a newly established world-wide disabled women's organisation. They're in the process of seeking consultative status with the United Nations. Their membership spans over 50 countries already. I committed to distribute their resources and online contact details to my WBUAP contacts.

Over the past year women's organisations shared with one another initiatives and activities held on international Women's Day, to highlight the achievements and aspirations of blind women and girls.

Funding, training and scholarship opportunities were distributed to member countries.

After nearly four years, we've been contacted to revive the international women's network, usually facilitated at global WBU level. We're preparing a submission to the UN on general comments for article 6 of the CRPD to do with women and girls. We'll be looking for a student at a tertiary institution's women's studies or some such to help with mapping of resources and opportunities for women. We'll refresh the WBU mentoring and leadership toolkit, developed 12 years ago. And I'm to feedback on how goals and indicators in the Incheon Strategy can be picked up on by us at WBU level.

Most recently we've provided input via our WBUAP Chair Michiko Tabata, about Shiseido Amenity Goods and braille labelling on cosmetics and hotel amenities.

Access to the Environment and Transport Forum

Mary Schnackenberg writes:

Martine Abel-Williamson, in her role as WBU Strategic Objective Lead on Access to the Environment & Transport, organised the Access to the Environment and Transport Forum. Participants from Kenya, the United Arab Emirates, Australia and New Zealand gathered for three days of presentations and discussions in Auckland, New Zealand, from Wednesday 13 to Friday 15 April 2016. The forum was jointly hosted by the Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand (Blind Citizens NZ), the World Blind Union (WBU), Auckland Council (the local government authority), and the Royal New Zealand Foundation of the Blind (Blind Foundation) Guide Dog Services.

Topics discussed included:

- Quiet vehicles;
- International air travel including travel with a guide dog;
- Universal design;
- Indoor navigation using technology; and
- Shared spaces.

On the last day the forum members drew up draft position statements for discussion at the upcoming General Assembly of the World Blind Union.

A full report of the forum is on the WBUAP website at <http://wbuap.org/index/archives/900>.

Update on the Marrakesh Treaty

Neil Jarvis writes:

In July, Canada became the 20th country to ratify the Marrakesh Treaty, so it will come into force for those countries which have ratified it on 30 September this year. North Korea became the fifth country in our region to ratify the treaty in February, joining South Korea, Mongolia, Australia and Singapore. New Zealand and Thailand are expected to ratify within the next few months, once the legislative process has been completed in each country.

The Marrakesh Treaty will make it easier to exchange accessible books and other content across international borders, thus doing much to combat the book famine experienced by blind people throughout the world, but especially in developing countries. Now that the treaty is about to come into force, the benefits which will accrue to those countries which ratify will be immediate. So the WBU urges everyone to increase efforts to get their country to ratify if it has not yet done so.

The Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA), a multi-national trade agreement between countries around the Pacific Rim, was signed in February after several years of negotiation. The intellectual property (IP) chapter of that agreement could have complicated the Marrakesh Treaty progress we have been making. A campaign by many organisations in countries affected by TPPA was successful in reducing such potential risks; indeed, Marrakesh is recognised appropriately by TPPA. It will be important though to ensure that each national implementation of TPPA does not damage the gains made by implementing Marrakesh. It could happen that national interpretation of TPPA might, intentionally or otherwise, dilute or even effectively block the benefits of Marrakesh. The 12 countries which are party to TPPA are: Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Singapore, the United States and Viet Nam. Thus, there are several countries in the Asia Pacific region which are affected, and we urge colleagues in those countries to participate in discussions about TPPA in their own country, specifically as it affects exceptions and Technical Protection Measures, thereby protecting the gains made through Marrakesh.

If you would like advice or information from WBU to assist with the Marrakesh Treaty campaign in your country, please contact Neil Jarvis, email njarvis@blindfoundation.org.nz.

The Adaptive Equipment Loan Scheme

Ivan Ho writes:

In 2014 the WBUAP Committee on Employment & Economic Empowerment (CEEE) applied to the Standard Chartered Bank for a grant of \$180,000 under their Seeing is Believing Innovation Fund. This was to run the Adaptive Equipment Loan Scheme (AELS) in three countries. The Bank approved only \$60,000 to conduct a pilot project with the understanding that, if it should prove successful, further applications could be considered by them. After a selection process, the National Council for the Blind of Malaysia (NCBM) was chosen to trial the project.

However, finding itself lacking in experience and realising that it had to widen the scope after encountering other obstacles, NCBM conducted three workshops. The first Workshop on Job Readiness was facilitated by Brian Dibbins, an Employment Consultant from the Royal Society for the Blind of South Australia (RSB), to which representatives from the Myanmar National Association of the Blind, the Indonesian Blind Union and the Philippines Blind Union were invited to join with the local participants. The second Workshop on Enhancing the Job Readiness of Blind and Vision Impaired University Students brought together participants from five universities. The third Workshop on Working Together to Enhance the Job Opportunities for the Blind and Vision Impaired included Government officials with connections to the recruitment of civil employees.

The final report on the AELS Project was released by Tony Starkey, the new Chairman (as Andrew Daly had resigned in November 2015). The pilot project did, to a certain extent, achieve its goals as shown by the following results:

Who were the Beneficiaries?

If we were to count the persons who benefited directly from the AELS, the number would appear negligible - ten. However, if we were to take into consideration the spilt-over effects on the lives of all who took part in the various activities organised, we could then appreciate the impact it had on all involved.

Fourteen persons, including four leaders from MNAB, PERTUNI and PBU who attended one of the workshops mentioned earlier. It was hoped that, upon return to their respective countries, they would look at employment issues more seriously with the knowledge gained.

There were at least twenty Government officials who participated in two of the workshops. They came from the Public Services Commission (the department responsible for recruiting civil staff), Department of Human Resource, the Social Security Organisation and the National Council for People with Disabilities. There were ten representatives from five universities from across the country. Over twenty under-graduates and post-graduates were invited to the workshops held during the course of the project. The experiences and information gained, and the opportunity created for networking with the officials from the Government departments and institutions of higher learning should, in some ways, be found useful to them when they were ready to enter the job market. There were ten persons who benefited directly from the AELS Project by receiving the loan of adaptive equipment such as - OpenBook software, JAWS, scanners, Braille displays, Braille notetakers, magnifiers, etc.

Notable Achievements

Upon learning there was such a scheme and impressed by their enhanced performance, the employers of Dr. Wong Huey Siew and Low Looi Seong employed at the Open University of Malaysia and Ready Advocates and Solicitors respectively, purchased the equipment outright for them.

Chia Shui Yee, the first blind and vision impaired person in Malaysia to have received a Degree in Pharmacy, was able to be accepted at the Serdang Hospital as a Pharmaceutical Researcher after Dr. Goh Pik Pin, Head of the Clinical Research

Department, was impressed with her capability and with the equipment that enhanced her performance.

Some of the materials used by Brian Dibbins at the Workshop on Job Readiness had been translated into the Malay language and used as training materials for 34 higher secondary blind and vision impaired students who attended the Career Motivation Camp conducted by NCBM. These camps are held by NCBM for students waiting for their examination results at the end of the year which would determine whether they proceed with their education or leave for vocational training and the job market.

The WBUAP Board and Policy Council take this opportunity to thank Andrew Daly for his contributions to the CEEE and to WBUAP during his chairmanship, and to Tony Starkey for co-ordinating the SIB project in Malaysia. We hope he will continue to serve in the next quadrennium and bring the AELS Project to more countries in the Region.

The 13th WBUAP Massage Seminar

Ivan Ho writes:

Just before the close of the successful 12th Massage Seminar in Bangkok in May 2014 that attracted over 300 participants, Teddy Kahil, President of the Philippines Blind Union (PBU) offered to host the next Seminar in Manila. His offer was gladly accepted. And almost immediately Zhu Gang, Chairman of the WBUAP Massage Commission, and his members started the preparatory work. This entailed determining the dates, costing, attracting participants and sponsorships, and identifying a suitable venue. The latter meant paying a visit to Manila to inspect the site and to hold discussions with the local Organising Committee.

The local Organising Committee, chaired by Jose Ranola, and his team comprising Teddy Kahil, Victor Rescober and Michael Barredo, did a splendid job. They got everything organised for the Opening Ceremony on 4 May, including a Welcome Cultural Presentation by the Philippines National School for the Blind.

The Seminar ran from 4 - 6 May at the Century Park Hotel, Manila with the theme "Maximising Skills, Technologies and Opportunities for Economic Empowerment". The occasion was graced by Dr. Vicente Belizario, Jr., Undersecretary of Health. There were 250 participants, 150 of whom were from overseas. The WBUAP Board and Policy Council were in full force to give moral support, with Zhu Gang and Michiko Tabata, as the WBUAP President, delivering congratulatory speeches. One of the presenters was a past president of WBUAP, Chuji Sashida, now the Executive Director of the National Committee of Welfare for the Blind of Japan. He spoke on the topic "Social Protection and Health Care for Massage Therapists in the Asia-Pacific Region".

One of the highlights of the Seminar which was first introduced in Bangkok by Zhu Gang, was the competition to select the best model massage shop. Three entries were received - from China, Japan and Philippines - and all were excellent in their own ways. This posed a very difficult situation for the judges. They finally decided to award Certificates of Excellence to the three contenders. To attract more entries for future competitions, the Commission would consider including the best-run massage training centres.

At the end of the Seminar the participants adopted The Consolidated WBUAP Regional Plan of Action for ASEAN and APEC. As these massage seminars are very technical in nature - dealing with health and therapeutic topics - it is hoped that the information shared, the techniques demonstrated and the recommendations adopted would be brought back by the participants to their respective countries to advance further the massage profession to yet greater heights.

Towards the close of the Seminar the participants were taken aback when Zhu Gang announced he was stepping down from the chairmanship after holding the position for eight years and had co-ordinated the organising of four biennial seminars. But they were cheered up when Wang YongCheng, Chairman of the Fujian Association of the Blind, was elected the new Chairman of the Commission. Wang further brightened up the spirit of the participants when he invited every one to Fujian, China to take part in the 2018 Massage Seminar. Remember, the Chinese and the Japanese are not fond of the figure "fourteen" but "18" (maning prosperity) is welcomed by the Chinese!

The WBUAP Board and Policy Council take this opportunity to express their deep gratitude to Zhu Gang for his eight years of service to WBUAP. In those years he has raised the massage profession to a higher level. Apart from his expert advice and supervision of the four seminars held in Seoul, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok and Manila, he will be remembered for organising the 3-month Asia Pacific Massage Instructors' Course in Changsha for fifteen massage instructors from this Region at an estimated cost of US \$80,000. We also take this opportunity to welcome Wang YongCheng onto the new Policy Council when it is constituted in Orlando in August this year.

Donors

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Mr. Hiroaki Utsumi
Mr. Ken Adachi
Mr. Koichi Hamada

East Wind Editorial Team contact details

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

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

That concludes this issue of East Wind No. 18.