

East Wind No. 16

Official Newsletter of the World Blind Union-Asia Pacific

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www.wbuap.org

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From The Editorial Team

Greetings from all of us in the Editorial Team!

We have just passed the mid-year point and we hope that all of you are on track achieving your ‘personal’ or ‘official’ resolutions that you made at the beginning of the year. If not, you still have another six months to work at it.

In this issue, we have news from Malaysia and Myanmar and the latest update on the Marrakesh Treaty. We also list some events you may want to attend in the Asia-Pacific Region in the coming months.

We welcome any news and comments from our readers. Please send them to anyone of us in the Editorial Team. Our contact information can be found at the end of this publication.

Happy reading.

Wong Yoon Loong
Editor.

Progress Report on the Marrakesh Treaty Ratification Campaign in the Asia-Pacific Region

By Neil Jarvis

In March, Singapore acceded to the treaty and has thereby set the standard for others to follow.

Summary of Government positions stated in the WIPO Regional Meeting in Singapore

Cambodia: Copyright law of 2003, modelled on many other laws of that time; not a member of Berne Convention or WCT. It needs to make many amendments to national copyright legislation, and welcomes support from WIPO and others.

China: Actively seeking to revise copyright law to ratify Marrakesh as soon as possible. There are 10 million people who are vision impaired in China; currently there are gaps between Marrakesh and China copyright law. People who are blind are the only beneficiaries under existing legislation.

Fiji: Copyright Act 1996. Marrakesh means the Act requires urgent attention. There will be considerable legislative amendments needed. Government prepared to work with Fiji Blind Association and others.

Indonesia: There was a 2014 amendment to the copyright law. The amendment addresses the requirements of Marrakesh, and there is a commitment to ensure it complies. Necessary regulations are currently being prepared. There is a

process for ratification in motion, hopefully in 2015.

Laos: Has an intellectual property law. They do not expect any problem in ratifying the treaty but expect it will take time.

Malaysia: 2012 saw an amendment to the copyright law. Officials are currently studying the mechanism necessary to comply with Marrakesh. This will take time. The 2012 amendment included exceptions for people who are vision impaired and others. Regulations to implement Marrakesh will follow when ready.

Mongolia: Current copyright law includes exceptions for people who are vision impaired. Government working on necessary amendments. The intellectual property office has prepared all documents of accession. Cabinet will discuss these in the near future, then it will pass to Parliament. Parliament will then be asked to adopt the law which will allow for accession later this year.

Myanmar: The existing copyright law is the 1914 law. There is much work to do to bring it up to date. A new law has been drafted. The new law will be in line with Marrakesh. The new draft law has been submitted to the intellectual property office for comment. It will later go to Parliament. This is regarded as not just a matter of access, but of human

rights as well. Note though that the administration of the law is likely to be a challenge, but an appropriate intellectual property system will be developed in the near future.

Collaboration with UNDP

WBUAP is being assisted through a partnership with the UNDP AP region and UNESCAP. UNDP is carrying out a mapping study on the readiness of countries in the region to implement Marrakesh.

In March, UNDP recruited Jonathan Band as a legal consultant to help with the multi-country legal analysis/mapping process.

To support Jonathan's preliminary research, UNDP has already compiled a list of copyright laws and related information for the target countries.

We expect a report that is strong both on advocacy and technical fronts, so that it could be used as a practical tool for facilitating the broad spectrum of the ratification process.

EXERTS FROM THE SPEECH BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF WBUAP

(Given by Ivan Ho on the official opening of the headquarters of Myanmar National Association of the Blind, 23 June 2015).

I want to thank the President and members of the Executive Council of the Myanmar National Association of the Blind (MNAB) for inviting my wife and I to witness this happy and auspicious occasion, the official opening of your headquarters which you can now call your home, and a place from where you can operate more effectively in carrying out the work of MNAB.

Let me also hasten to congratulate the Government of Myanmar and the MNAB for some of the following outstanding achievements made in recent years. There are too many to mention, but I will list a few of them:

(a) The successful registration of MNAB as the national organisation co-ordinating the work for people who are blind and partially sighted, working hand in hand with the Government and with other disability organisations to achieve national objectives. MNAB has made steady progress in setting up massage centres, thereby creating employment for BPS masseurs. MNAB has continued strengthening its organisational structure, and on 6 June opened another branch in Sagaing.

(b) The signing of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) by the Government of Myanmar. This action, as most people will know, is a milestone step taken by the Government in acknowledging and recognising the rights of disabled people to live as equal citizens of the country, enjoying all the rights and

privileges accorded to them but, at the same time, requiring disabled people to assume the responsibilities of citizenship.

(c) Consequent to the signing of the CRPD disabled peoples' organisations (DPOs), including MNAB, were invited by the Government to contribute in-puts in the drafting of the National Law on Disabilities. This Law, I note with great satisfaction, was signed by the President of Myanmar on 5 June and was announced the following day. Similar to what is happening in other countries, the PWD Act will be the foundation stone on which all legislation and policies affecting the disabled in the country will be influenced. I salute all stakeholders on this fantastic document.

(d) In the field of education, the Government, working with MNAB and other organisations serving the BPS, has made tremendous strides in bringing literacy to the BPS. With assistive equipment, such as computers with speech screen readers and other devices, BPS are able to enroll into institutions of higher learning, and they are able to perform tasks which until now they were prevented from undertaking. There are several BPS among us who are graduates, and there are people who have been to Japan, Malaysia and other countries to learn ICT, acquire advanced skills in massage and other aspects of rehabilitation. With the implementation of the UNCRPD and the PWD Act, I believe more BPS will be able to receive education as

advocated by the UN and other bodies in calling for Education for All.

Despite the progress made, I would like to Appeal to the Government: education and ICT skills will mean nothing much to anyone who wants to live an independent and productive life if there are no prospects for him or her to get employment. Now that foreign investments are coming fast into the country and international conglomerates are setting up their businesses here, I am very confident job opportunities will definitely be created. I fervently hope the BPS will be able to enjoy the fruits of progress as equal citizens.

Here, I appeal most sincerely to the Government to show a good example to the private sector by giving employment opportunities to the BPS who have the qualifications and the skills to take up the jobs. And to MNAB, I urge the leaders to continue introducing new services and to upgrade existing ones to equip your members with the necessary skills to face the challenges that lie ahead. It will not be easy, but with determination and hard work, you will reap the fruits of your struggle.

In closing, let me again congratulate all of you for the tremendous progress made, and thank you for inviting me and my wife to be among you on this happy occasion.

God bless MNAB and its work.

Thank you.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WORKSHOP ON WORKING TOGETHER TO ENHANCE JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE BLIND AND VISION IMPAIRED

The workshop on strengthening interaction with people who are blind and vision impaired persons to enhance their job opportunities was attended by 20 participants representing the Government, institutions of higher learning and the National Council for the Blind Malaysia (NCBM).

OBJECTIVES:

1. Encourage and help to facilitate blind and vision-impaired (BVI) job-seekers to apply for Government employment in achieving the goal of the Policy on the 1 Percent Job Quota for the Disabled as announced by the Government in the 1990s.
2. Collaborate with the Government and institutions of higher learning in meeting the special requirements of the BVI's in employment by providing assistive equipment and training on its use, career counselling and blindness-specific skills enhancements.

ORGANISER & SPONSOR: The Workshop is organised by the National Council for the Blind, Malaysia (NCBM), in collaboration with the Royal Society for the Blind of Australia (RSB), under the auspices of the World Blind Union-

Asia Pacific (WBUAP) Committee on Employment and Economic Empowerment of the Blind. This project is sponsored by the Seeing Is Believing Innovative Fund of Standard Chartered Bank of the United Kingdom.

DATES: 8 - 11 June 2015.

VENUE: Corus Paradise Resort, Port Dickson, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia.

We, the participants comprising representatives from Government departments, Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL's) & companies from the Private Sector, attending the above-mentioned Workshop held in Port Dickson, Negeri Sembilan from 8 - 11 June 2015, do appeal to the relevant stakeholders, both Government & Non-Government entities, to help in realising the following recommendations:

1. Appeal to the Department of Persons with Disabilities, Section on Employment, to evaluate the Job Access Australia programme jobaccess.gov.au. With the view of adopting and introducing it in this country for the purpose of assisting disabled job-seekers in the provision and training on the use of assistive equipment, acquisition of job readiness skills and the setting up of an efficient support service, including the people who are blind and vision-impaired (BVI), reaching the target of the Policy on the one Percent Employment for Persons with Disabilities (PWD's) into the Civil Service.

Further, to appoint a National Disability Recruitment Co-ordinator whose functions include creating awareness on the capabilities and necessary adjustments for the PWD's within the recruiting agency and decision-makers at the ministry level down to the local authorities.

2. Call upon the Department of Persons with Disabilities to set up a Steering Committee to comprise representatives from NGO's, IHL's having Disabled Support Units (DSU's), and relevant Government departments to meet on a regular basis to discuss issues pertaining to the employment of PWD's and the recruitment on the one Percent Policy. Some of the functions of this Steering Committee to include the following: Assist the Government by contributing in-puts and in monitoring the implementation of the relevant portions of the PWD Act pertaining to accessible transportation and barrier-free environment to facilitate access to employment of the PWD's; conduct briefings and engage with HR personnel in the Public and Private Sectors; promote collaboration and smart partnerships among the stakeholders; make recommendations to the Department of PWD's on the one percent Employment Policy; review the programmes of NGO's serving the PWD's receiving Government funding in the provision of support services to the PWD's job-seekers in the Public Service Commission and Private Sector employers.

3. Towards achieving the target of one percent employment of PWD's

into the Civil Service, urge the Department of PWD's to set specific goals to be achieved, give emphasis on its enforcement, accord recognition to those agencies which have fulfilled or exceeded the one percent quota of employment for the PWD's, and to showcase the successful PWD's in the mainstream media.

4. Call upon the Government to review existing laws and policies relating to employment of the PWD's, particularly in the Private Sector, by giving more attractive tax incentives, assistance for equipment acquisition and modification, and for attending skills training programmes, etc.

5. Call upon the National Council for the Blind, Malaysia (NCBM) to urgently organise a one-day workshop to examine the relevant training modules of Job Malaysia. Their current focus is on training mainstream job-seekers, with the view of identifying and selecting the appropriate modules for necessary adaptation for the training of BVI job-seekers. Once the task has been completed, to get trainers from Job Malaysia and the organisations serving the BVI's to conduct training sessions for the BVI job-seekers to accelerate the rate of successful placement throughout the country.

6. Express deep appreciation to the organisations for jointly organising the Workshop - The National Council for the Blind, Malaysia, the World Blind Union-Asia Pacific and the Royal Society for the Blind of Australia - and to the Seeing Is Believing Innovative Fund of

Standard Chartered Bank of the United Kingdom for sponsoring this informative and eye-opening event. The information shared, and the glimpse into the world of assistive equipment that can enable BVI persons to be productive employees, have greatly changed our perception of the capabilities and the determination of BVI persons to lead independent and useful lives.

Further, urge NCBM, as the organisation championing the interests of the BVI's, to continue holding such workshops for targeted groups and distributing more media releases to keep up the momentum on creating public awareness on the capabilities of the BVI's.

Dated: 11 June 2015.

Campaign to remove drivers licence requirement from job criteria in Australia

The Royal Society for the Blind (RSB) in Australia encourages employers to consider alternative options for transport before making a current drivers licence an essential criteria for employment.

RSB client Connie, who was born with Albinism, recently graduated with a degree in social work and is looking forward to joining the workforce. Having been rejected for a job in a call centre due to not having a drivers licence, Connie is petitioning to have this requirement removed from all jobs that do not need this criteria.

“Unless the ability to drive is a crucial requirement for the role, we are calling on employers to have a good look at their selection criteria,” RSB Executive Director, Andrew Daly, said.

“Those with a vision impairment – together with thousands of other Australians who are not able to achieve a drivers licence – are often automatically culled against this job selection criteria and many don’t even reach an interview scenario.

“That is why we are calling on Government to take a leadership position by removing the ‘drivers’ licence essential’ criteria from many jobs within the public service. This is a great opportunity for the Government to lead the way in terms of equal employment rights for people living with a disability,” Andrew said.

The RSB will continue to campaign to create equal employment opportunities for people who are blind or vision impaired in Australia.

Braille Codes Standardisation Workshop

The National Council for the Blind Malaysia (NCBM) jointly, with the South-east Asia Ministers of Education Organisation on Special Needs (SEAMEOSen), held a workshop from 25-28 May 2015 to standardise the Braille codes used in Malaysia (Malay, English, Maths, Science, Music and Arabic). This

workshop was attended by 52 experts, mostly comprising teachers of the blind who are vision impaired themselves, officials from various departments within the Ministry of Education and member-organisation of NCBM.

Among the significant recommendations from this workshop were:

1. To mandate the Braille Council of Malaysia which was established by NCBM to be the authority in charge of matters related to Braille in Malaysia.
2. Malaysia to adopt the Unified English Braille Code by 2017. A transition plan to be mapped out for this purpose which will include training of teachers, policy change at the Ministry of Education and creation of awareness among blind and vision impaired users.
3. The composition of experts in future revision of the Malay Braille Code should include those who are proficient in Malay Braille, linguists, and computer programmers to ensure that the changes can be used smoothly in Braille Translation Software.

Promotion of NVDA in Malaysia

In promoting the NVDA screen-reader in Malaysia, the National Council for the Blind Malaysia (NCBM) conducted training for 12 computer instructors of organisations for and of the blind from 17-19 June 2015. The training components included installation, settings, configurations, navigation and add-ons. They were also introduced to the Malay language using ‘e-speak’.

With the inclusion of the Malay language, participants are more confident to introduce the NVDA screen-reader to their blind trainees. NCBM will now work with the Special Education Division and the Curriculum Development Department of the Ministry of Education to include NVDA Screen-reader in the syllabus for computer lessons.

An introductory walk to George Town’s heritage – a walk specially designed for people with vision impairment

In November 2014, the National Council for the Blind Malaysia (NCBM) and George Town World Heritage Inc. (GTWHI) joined forces to make George Town a more inclusive city and open up the city and its attractions to people with vision impairment.

For the first initiative, a volunteer group of the GTWHI’s “Friends of George Town Heritage” prepared a walk from Esplanade to the Acheen Mosque, touching on all the main communities. In May 2015 they were trained by Dr Joel Snyder, an American specialist in Audio Description (AD). Most people confuse Audio tours with Audio Described tours. Audio tours are usually for the sighted and give no real description of what is seen and focus only on the history. Audio description is ‘sight made verbal’. This means participants with vision impairment have an idea of the site’s appearance.

The volunteer guides also received training on how to interact with people with vision impairment.

The guides have gone through a period of trials, test walks and improvement. With the trials now complete, the heritage walk will be launched officially on Saturday 1 August 2015.

The walk can be conducted in English, Mandarin and Malay and will be charged at RM 350 for groups from one to 15 persons. Bookings require three days' notice through GTWHI. Notably, this is one of the rare (if not only) UNESCO World Heritage Sites that offer an Audio described Heritage Walk.

This coincides with the unveiling of the internationally recognised logo for Audio Description, which will be used by those sites offering Audio Description.

During the launch, the trained guides will receive an AD button for easy identification, and will give a small demonstration of Audio Description at the church compound.

Apart from this heritage walk, other sites have also joined this project and now also offer Audio described Tours, such as the Church of St George The Martyr, (the oldest Anglican Church in South East Asia) and the Sun Yat Sen Museum.

It is hoped that with this project, others will join in offering Audio Description for their sites, helping George Town to be attractive for people with vision impairment. It is also hoped that it may be the start of inclusive tourism, not only for people with vision impairment, but also with other disabilities. It is not only a social requirement, but there is also an economic incentive as this is definitely a niche market in a fast growing industry recognising the need for inclusive tourism. With the present project, Malaysia and in the first instance George Town will play a leading role in the South East Asian region.

Upcoming Events

1st Asia-Pacific Vision Impaired Youth Summit

This is the 1st Asia Pacific Vision Impaired Youth Summit organised jointly by the Society of the Blind in

Malaysia (SBM), the National Council for the Blind Malaysia (NCBM), The Japan Braille Library and the World Blind Union-Asia Pacific.

The details of the event are:

Date: 7 - 9 August 2015

Venue: Central Seaview hotel

Penang, Malaysia

Theme: "Taking Control of Our Destiny"

For further information, please visit our website www.apviys2015.org

Eleventh China Information Accessibility Forum

The Eleventh China Information Accessibility Forum will be held at China Braille Library in Beijing on 21 and 22 September. The theme of the 11th forum will be "Straddling, Merging and Sharing—a New Level of Information Accessibility". There will be several sub-forums including "Assistive Technology", "Education and Training", "Public Cultural Services", "Accessible Reading", "Accessible Publishing" and "Government Assistance on Blind Aids and Services". For more information, please e-mail liudx2011@126.com

ICEVI East Asia Regional Conference

The East Asia Region of ICEVI will host its regional conference on **Education For All Children with Vision Impairment (EFA-VI) Beyond 2015: Asian Perspectives at Hotel Sanur Paradise Plaza from 28 September to 1 October 2015.** For more information, please e-mail Indonesia.icevi@yahoo.co.id

ASEAN Disability Forum 2015

As the Chair of the Association of South East Asia Nations (ASEAN) in 2015, Malaysia will be organising the ASEAN Disability Forum 2015 from 19-21 October in Kuala Lumpur. For more information, please e-mail mcd_dpimalaysia@yahoo.com

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