

EAST WIND

Official Newsletter of the World Blind Union-Asia Pacific
No. 14

Please visit the World Blind Union-Asia Pacific website!

www.wbuap.org

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Greetings from the Editorial Team

This issue of East Wind contains news from around the World Blind Union Asia-Pacific (WBUAP) Region in particular news from the WBUAP Board and Policy Council and information on the forthcoming WBUAP Mid-Term General Assembly. In addition, we have made some recommendations to improve communication tools in the region. Do let us know what you feel about our ideas.

We like to hear from you. Feel free to contact anyone of us to share your comments and feedback. Our contact information can be found at the end of this publication.

Happy reading.

Editorial Team

To all Delegates, Honorary Life Members and Friends of the World Blind Union-Asia Pacific (WBUAP):

Dear All,

ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

Greetings to you from your Board and Policy Council (BPC), and we hope this issue finds you in good health and high spirits.

Here is some information we want to share with you, and some requests for

which we are asking for your co-operation:

Country Reports:

One of the main highlights of the Mid-Term Regional Assembly is the presentation of Country Reports. Realising this, your BPC will make more time available for questions and answers. Please start preparing your reports but make them brief and informative on your achievements, successes and challenges. Send your reports in electronic format to the Secretary General at least 60 days before the Assembly for circulation.

Revision of the Constitution:

As members were informed last year, your BPC is revising the Constitution of the WBUAP and will be presenting it at the MRGA. We are inviting you to join in the exercise by submitting your amendments and suggestions to reach the Secretary General by the end of July. We will collate your amendments into one document to be circulated 45 days before the Assembly. You can access the Constitution on the WBUAP website.

The Silent Auction:

In an effort to raise some funds for WBUAP to carry out more activities, Dr. Kevin Murfitt, Treasurer and Chair of the Committee on Resource Generation, will be organising a Silent Auction during the Gala Dinner at the MRGA. He is requesting all delegates and members to bring along items of cultural significance (useful or decorative) and donate them to

WBUAP. Someone at the auction table will record your bid, and the highest bidder will get the item at the cut-off time. Do help to make this event a success. If you have ideas to help WBUAP get more funds, do please pass them on to us.

Delegates' Information Update:

It will be very much appreciated if you will kindly update the information of your delegates and have it sent to the Secretary General without delay. The details needed are: Names of delegates, designation, organisations they belong to, address, phone numbers and emails.

Closing Date for Receiving Proposals and Resolutions:

All proposals and resolutions to be tabled at the MRGA should reach the Secretary General at least 60 days before the MRGA. We appeal to you to send them to us before mid-September.

Please help to circulate this information to as many persons as possible, and encourage them to attend the MRGA - our great event of the year.

Thank you.

With best wishes,

(Ivan Ho Tuck Choy),
Secretary General,
World Blind Union-Asia Pacific

News From the WBUAP Board & Policy Council

Hello Everyone,

Your Board and Policy Council met in Bangkok from 3 - 4 May 2014, and among some of the matters discussed and decisions made were the following:

1. The Mid-Term Regional General Assembly:

As advised in the May Circular, the Hong Kong Blind Union is the host and the Assembly will run from 21 - 24 November 2014 at the Cyberport 3 convention site. The Youth and Women's Fora will take place on the afternoon of 21 November, and the Welcome Reception in the evening. The business sessions of the mid-term regional assembly (MRGA) will begin on 22 November, to be followed by the various informative and useful workshops, and, of course, the Gala Dinner. Remember, Hong Kong is a very busy port, so do not miss the boat! Register immediately by visiting the website www.wbuapga2014.org or email to enquiry@wbuapga2014.org

The organisers are also looking to sponsor 30 youths with innovative ideas for projects; so do not miss the opportunity. Please read the article on the WBUAP Mid Term General Assembly for more information.

For those who are preparing their country reports, please go to <http://wbuap.org/index/archives/749> to access the template.

2. Seeing is Believing (SIB)

Project:

The Committee on Employment and Economic Empowerment (CEEE), headed by Mr. Andrew Daly, made an application through the Royal Society for the Blind for \$180,000 from the Seeing is Believing Fund of Standard Chartered Bank. They were only successful in securing a \$60,000 grant for a pilot project to run an Equipment Loan Scheme. After some hard decisions, Malaysia was chosen to run the pilot project. If this should prove successful, StanChart has indicated it could consider giving another \$120,000 to start similar projects in Thailand and Vietnam.

Arising from this Project, the National Council for the Blind, Malaysia (NCBM) running the SIB Project, organised a Job Preparedness Workshop from 24 - 26 June 2014. It was conducted by Mr. Brian Dibbins, an employment consultant of RSB with long experience in this field. Due to budgetary constraints, NCBM was only able to invite some participants from the ASEAN countries.

3. Support for NVDA:

The Committee on ICT and Assistive Technologies, under the Chair of Mr. Neil Jarvis, expressed its appreciation to the staff of RSB and Dr. Frances Gentle for having written the training material on the Non-Visual Desktop Application (NVDA) as a superb example of a quality training resource. CICTAT hoped this resource material could be translated into other languages so that more blind people in this region will have access to ICT.

NVDA is free and open-source screen reading software developed by NV-'access, a not-for-profit organisation run by Mr. Michael Curran and Mr. James Teh of Australia. NVDA is endorsed by WBU which, at its 8th General Assembly in 2012, collected over \$40,000 and donated to NV-'access to make PowerPoint accessible using this software. This task has been completed and it is working very satisfactorily. To further support the work of NV-'access, the Nippon Foundation is this year sponsoring the employment of an administrator to allow the two software developers to concentrate on their research work. Also, the Thailand Association of the Blind at their April National Convention, donated \$22,000 to NV-'access to support its effort in continuing to make this software free and open-source.

Is your organisation promoting the use of NVDA or are you still spending huge sums of money to purchase expensive screen-reader software? For more information, read the article on this subject appearing elsewhere in the East Wind or contact Mr. Andrew Daly at adaly@rsb.org.au concerning the resource material.

4. Membership Matters:

As a result of several visits to Beijing and Macau by Mr. Chong Chan-Yau, the President of HKBU, The Macau organisation of the Blind has been admitted into WBU with one delegate. This was made possible when the China Association of the Blind (CAB), under the leadership of Mr. Li Weihong, its President, agreed

to give up another of its remaining six votes. The other four votes were previously given to Hong Kong and Taiwan.

We welcome Mr. Albert Cheong, President, and members of the Macau People with Visually Impaired Right Promotion Association (MPVIPA) into the fold of WBU and WBUAP. Let us get to know more about your organisation, and let us work together for the progress of the blind and partially sighted in the region.

In the meantime, Dr. Kevin Murfitt has reported that Tonga and Vanuatu have applied to WBU for membership, Kiribati is being encouraged to follow suit, and Samoa is being helped to re-activate their membership. Mr. Kua Cheng Hock, a former president of WBUAP, is also helping to sort out the membership fee of Brunei. Attempts are being made to visit North Korea to encourage the blind people there to form an organisation.

5. Sharing Joy with Neighbouring Countries:

The Thailand Association of the Blind (TAB) has been very active in the region this year. In January they hosted the 1st Thailand International English Reading Competition at the side-lines of their 19th National Reading Competition. The participating countries were Malaysia, Singapore and Vietnam, and TAB sponsored each contingent of 4 contestants and an escort, including their airfares.

In April, TAB again organised the 2nd ASEAN Community Blind Forum for the youths to exchange ideas. They

sponsored 15 participants from 6 countries - Laos, Vietnam, Philippines, Singapore and Malaysia to the event.

TAB also organised a music festival in early January and they received 105 applications. Due to the political unrest in the country, TAB was only able to accept 10 bands, but they hoped to increase the participation next year. It is the vision of Mr. Torpong Selanon, President of TAB, that the music festival should eventually encourage blind singers and musicians to turn their hobbies into enterprises.

6. Will This Dream Ever Come True:

A Brainstorming Workshop was organised by the Editorial Board to review the present communication tools used by the Region, particularly with the WBUAP Website which was set up with the financial assistance from Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA). The Workshop was held in Kuala Lumpur from 3 - 4 March 2014 and was funded by the DANIDA Project. Some of the recommendations put forward were:

a) That the WBUAP Website be re-designed to provide clear text-based information accessible by blind and partially sighted users, with complementary graphic contents for sighted users. To this end, the tabs to include new features, such as: About Us, Our Stories, Activities and Programmes in the Region, Tourism and Travel in the Region, Funding Applications, Individual Scholarships, Writing Proposals, etc.

b) Introduce a mobile version of the WBUAP Website that can be accessed via mobile devices, such as smart phones which are becoming more common these days.

c) Set up an Internet Radio channel to be integrated into the WBUAP Website as a communication tool across the Region. Information can be streamed live or pre-recorded from each country via the Internet for free or via a paid server on a rotation basis. Information can be uploaded onto the Internet Radio with country-specific contents in local languages using free software. Each country will be encouraged to take turns to produce informative and relevant programmes according to guidelines to be drawn up.

It is hoped that with the introduction of the Internet Radio station, every country will have the opportunity to showcase their services, tell their success stories, conduct interviews with leaders and promising youths, promote their cultures and music. If this dream can be realised, it will open doors to many possibilities - training on broadcasting, interest in journalism, music promotion and audio description of interesting tourist spots in each other's country. Of course, there are great hurdles to overcome, but we must be brave to dream big to move forward. What are your thoughts on this Internet Radio proposition?

7. A New DANIDA Project:

Phase two of the three-year Project which was begun in 2011 with Laos and Mongolia had ended in December 2013. With some money left over for

minor activities, known as the No-Cost Extension Fund, a meeting was convened in Bangkok from 21 - 23 February to draft an application of about \$3 million for the third phase of the Capacity Building of Organisations of the Blind and Partially Sighted in the Developing Countries of the WBUAP Region. As recommended by WBUAP, Myanmar will be included as the third country apart from Mongolia and Laos. Present at the meeting were representatives from Myanmar, Mongolia, Laos, Denmark and WBUAP.

The application requires a huge volume of documentation which must go through the Disabled People's Organisation in Denmark (which the Danish Association of the Blind is a member), and be assessed by external consultants. If everything goes according to plan, the application will then go to DANIDA and the result should be known around September 2014.

Prepared by:

(Ivan Ho Tuck Choy),
Secretary General, WBUAP.

Call for Proposals – Presentation at Youth Forum of the WBUAP Mid-Term Regional General Assembly 2014

The Organizing Committee of the WBUAP Mid-Term Regional General Assembly 2014 is inviting vision impaired young people in the Asia Pacific region to attend and submit

innovative proposals for presentation at the Youth Forum.

The Forum will be held on 21 November 2014 to mark the beginning of the General Assembly. We are pleased to invite Ms Sabriye Tenberken, founder of a Training Centre for blind people in Tibet and Braille Without Borders to share with us her extraordinary personal experience. Moreover, there will be presentations of outstanding projects proposed by vision impaired young people and a roundtable discussion to brainstorm recommendations to WBUAP and governments in the region for promoting equal opportunity and the building of an inclusive society.

This is a great opportunity for young people with vision impairment in the region to exchange opinions and share their innovative ideas and dreams. It also serves as a platform to link up the projects with the resources required as potential funders will be invited to attend the event. Writers of 30 outstanding proposals will be sponsored to participate in the General Assembly. Deadline for submission is 31 July 2014.

For further information or enquiries, please feel free to contact Ms. Ashley Wong at enquiry@wbuapga2014.org or visit http://www.wbuapga2014.org/en_news_details.php?id=6

The 12th World Blind Union Asia-Pacific massage seminar 5-7 May 2014, Golden Tulip Sovereign Hotel, Bangkok

Bangkok has built up its profile in hosting international meetings for the blind for the second time in two years. In November 2012, it successfully hosted the 8th General Assembly of the World Blind Union and the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment Conference (WBU-ICEVI 2012), attracting more than 1,000 delegates hosted by Thailand Association of the Blind led by senator Monthian Buntan.

During 5-7 May, 2014, it contributed again to the meeting of the World Blind Union Asia-Pacific by hosting the 12th World Blind Union Asia-Pacific massage seminar. Held under the theme "Medical Massage for the Blind", the aim of the seminar was to promote massage among the blind as a sustainable profession for therapy and treatment, to promote traditional Thai massage internationally and exchange knowledge about massage among the blind from Asia-Pacific countries as a part of a contribution to better quality of life for the blind.

Hosted by the Foundation for the Employment Promotion of the Blind and co-hosted by Thailand Association of the Blind, the event was attended by around 300 vision impaired persons involved in massage from Asia-Pacific countries like China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Myanmar, Vietnam, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan and Thailand. This was the first time that participants from India attended this

seminar. The seminar comprised of the dissemination of academic knowledge exchanges and research in massage therapy, massage business models and treatment of physical disease by massage, and exhibitions on massage.

To give the seminar a touch of real life, massage demonstrations by massage therapists from Thailand, China, Japan, Korea and Taiwan in the treatment of specific areas of the body, such as shoulder, joint, neck, arm, spine were on offer as a means to widen knowledge base about massage among interested participants.

One key element that made this seminar a real success was a troupe of volunteers from a number of volunteer organizations in Thailand. They helped the blind delegates throughout the seminar. The volunteers assisted delegates from Bangkok International Airport and Don Muang airport, and around the accommodation and seminar venue. They accompanied the blind to site visits and around the venue. A manual on how to work efficiently with the blind was produced and published for the volunteers to study so that they could assist the delegates effectively.

Mr. Pecharat Techavachara, President of the Foundation for the Employment Promotion of the Blind and Chairman of the Local Organizing Committee of the 12th WBUAP Massage Seminar, said that, apart from the spirit of volunteers in Thailand, this seminar became possible because of the full support from relevant government agencies. They were the National Office for

Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities under the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, the Department for Development of Thai Traditional and Alternative Medicine under the Ministry of Public Health and the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB).

Thailand was a core and key body in establishing the World Blind Union Asia-Pacific (WBUAP) under the World Blind Union, whose mission is to raise the awareness on the capabilities of the blind and to advance their well-being. Thailand was the host of the first General Assembly of the World Blind Union Asia-Pacific in 2001 where the constitution of the organization was drafted. It is also a country famed internationally for traditional Thai massage, which is found in spa treatment services offered by leading hotels in all major cities. Massage is also a common profession of the blind in Thailand who need to take the test on technical know-how and practical exercises to be certified for the job by the Ministry of Public Health.

The Second Thailand International Blind Music Festival

Following the first Thailand International Blind Music Festival held in 2012, Thailand Association of the Blind held the second Thailand International Blind Music Festival under the theme “Breathing in the Dark”. The event was held between 14-15 December 2013 and 14 February 2014. During 14-15 December 2013, the event was held in the Santichaiprakarn Park in Bangkok

whereas the event on 14 February 2014 was held in Chiang Mai province, located in the northern part of the country. Various blind musicians and singers participated in the event, both from Thailand and abroad. The international bands taking part were: Sebastiao Antunes from Portugal; Fortissimo from Indonesia; Phalung Chai from Lao and AYDD Show from Cambodia. Besides, there were Thai musicians and singers such as the Ionion, CMBLIND BAND (a band from Chiang Mai School for the Blind), Lampang Blind Music and 555. At the festival, apart from the concert, there were also booths demonstrating various activities of blind people such as coffee-making, Thai blind massage and fortune telling. The event drew attention from the general public. We are looking forward to holding the 3rd Thailand International Blind Music Festival which will show to the public that we can create friendships without borders through music.

The 19th National Braille Reading and Writing Contest, the first International Braille Reading and Writing Contest and the sixth Marathon Braille Reading Contest

Between 17-19 January 2014, the Thailand Association of the Blind together with the Ratchasuda College, Mahidol University held the 19th National Braille Reading and Writing Contest, the first International Braille Reading and Writing Contest and the sixth Marathon Braille Reading Contest at the campus of Ratchasuda College, Mahidol University. The event started with the 19th National Braille

Reading and Writing Contest on 17 January 2014. There were 200 contestants from around the country, both students and blind adults. There were individual reading contests, team reading and writing contests. The winners of every contest received a plaque from HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn. The aim of this contest was to encourage blind people to continually practice reading and writing Braille.

The first International Braille Reading and Writing Contest was held on 18 January 2014. In this first year, there were 25 contestants from four countries; namely, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam and Thailand. There were individual reading and writing contests for those under 25 years and those who are above 25 years old. Contestants from all four countries performed excellently and were able to win in either the reading or writing contests.

The marathon Braille reading contest took place following the international Braille reading and writing contest in the afternoon of 18 January. The winner of this year's marathon Braille reading contest was a young lady called Arphorn Chanthila who was able to read Braille for 38 hours!

Review of the Communication Tools of the WBUAP: Outcome of a Brainstorming Meeting

WBUAP Editorial Board

As part of the capacity building of organisations of the blind and vision impaired (BVI) in developing countries

of the World Blind Union Asia-Pacific (WBUAP) Region project, the WBUAP Editorial Board (EB) met on 3 and 4 March 2014 at the offices of the National Council for the Blind, Malaysia to review the current methods of communication used by the WBUAP and to suggest better ways in which information about the WBUAP's activities and other blindness-related material can be shared across the region. This brainstorming meeting was financially supported by the Danish Association of the Blind (DAB), and the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), to whom the EB express deep gratitude. At the meeting, the WBUAP Secretary General and the members of the EB reviewed the region's current communication tools and developed recommendations to improve the sharing of information for BVI people, agencies for the blind and other stakeholders interested in the work of the WBUAP.

The following recommendations were made, which are summarised below.

The WBUAP Website

The EB believes that the WBUAP website is a key communication tool, but recommends that its content be updated and its structure changed so that it will appeal more widely to BVI people in the Asia-Pacific region, blindness sector organisations, donors, other sponsors and stakeholders and national and regional government representatives. In order to attract users to the website, its content needs to be relevant and timely, promoting current events and

information, and highlighting the work of the WBUAP and its members. The EB proposed that the website be redesigned so that content can be more easily found, and to ensure that it complies with WCAG2 guidelines for web accessibility.

Ideas proposed for new links and content included:

- About us;
- Our stories;
- Programs and activities happening in the region;
- Tourism and travel in the region;
- Funding Applications, submissions, individual scholarships, writing proposals and other opportunities;
- Support services and Toolkits;
- Links to the websites of member organisations to form regional directory;
- Technology campaigns, services and projects;
- Employment-incorporating the WBUAP employment portal
- WBU- updates;
- Publications;
- Donate button;
- Radio Listen button;
- Social Media sharing buttons.

Country Information Liaison Officers and WBUAP Editor

The EB recommends that these positions be created in order to source relevant information for the website and other WBUAP publications, and to manage the website's content and structure.

The EB recommends that a Country Information Liaison Officer (CILO) be appointed in each WBUAP member

country, on a voluntary basis, or with some financial support to reimburse them for the costs of carrying out their role.

In relation to the WBUAP website, it is recommended that each CILO be responsible for collecting relevant information from their country to be uploaded on to the WBUAP website, and to translate and distribute information from the website in to the language of their country so it can be made available to more users.

It is proposed that the CILO acts as a link between their country and the WBUAP, giving feedback regarding the website content.

The EB recommends the appointment of a WBUAP Editor who would be responsible for maintaining and promoting the WBUAP website, and uploading content sourced by the CILOs, as well as reporting to the WBUAP Board and Policy Council regarding the website. The WBUAP recommends that some payment be offered to the holder of this position.

East Wind

Although the EB recommended that the region's website become its main communication medium, it was proposed that East Wind remain, with its format changing to a smaller newsletter which would be redesigned as a publication to promote the work of the WBUAP, and as a marketing and sponsorship tool for its activities. The EB recommended that East Wind be published three times each year, and be compiled by the WBUAP Editor, in collaboration with the EB. Its content

would comprise a snapshot of current WBUAP website content, and highlight the most interesting developments and projects. East Wind would be designed to appeal to an audience outside the blindness sector, including donors, governments and NGOs. The newsletter would also be promoted to health and development workers, who can disseminate its contents to BVI people in remote communities, or who have no access to the website or material in other formats.

Radio Stream

The EB has recommended a radio stream to provide audio programs from the WBUAP website. It is proposed that the CILOs coordinate the preparation of programs from their country's website content, which can be broadcast over the radio stream in their own language. Each country's radio programs can also be made available by the CILO in formats such as CD, or local radio broadcast for BVI people without access to the internet.

The EB has submitted these recommendations for approval by the WBUAP Board and Policy Council and to the WBUAP Capacity-Building project donors. In proposing these changes, we hope that the communication mediums in the WBUAP region becomes more relevant to BVIs and other stakeholders. We also hope that, while trying to use the WBUAP website as our main communication tool, BVIs and others without internet access will also be able to stay informed about WBUAP activities. The EB will report back to readers of East Wind with further developments to this project.

Innovative RSB project steals the limelight

The Royal Society for the Blind (RSB) on behalf of the World Blind Union Asia-Pacific Committee on Employment, Economic and Empowerment (WBUAP CEEE) has secured funding for a landmark scheme that will change the lives for the people of Malaysia who are blind or vision impaired and struggling with employment.

The WBUAP CEEE was successful in receiving a grant from the Seeing is Believing Innovation fund for their Malaysian Adaptive Equipment Loan Scheme proposal after identifying a need for people who are blind or vision impaired in the Asia Pacific region the chance to access equipment that will help them in obtaining and retaining employment.

“By developing an adaptive technology loan pool, people who are blind or vision impaired will be provided with the opportunity to learn skills and then demonstrate that ability to future employers, ultimately benefiting them not only in a financial, but also a social sense,” says RSB Executive Director and WBUAP CEEE chairman, Andrew Daly.

“We identified that people who are blind or vision impaired in many Asia Pacific countries are prevented from employment due to the cost of accessing specialist adaptive technology like electronic magnifiers, Braille PDA’s and computer-screen magnification,” explains Andrew of the

project that will be first rolled out in Malaysia.

By enabling people to become “job ready” and exposing them to equipment training and loans and then subsequent work experience and trials, chances for securing meaningful and sustainable employment are greatly increased, adds Andrew.

“We have seen the benefits of such a system here at the RSB through RSB Employment Services who work closely with the RSB Adaptive Technology Centre to assist people who are blind or vision impaired in all manners of gaining and retaining employment.”

The landmark project aims to begin rollout in the latter half of 2014 in Malaysia and based on a successful outcome, a rollout in other areas of the Asia Pacific region where countries are struggling to place people who are blind or vision impaired in employment will also be targeted.

RSB shares knowledge with job-readiness program

Continuing its vision to help people who are blind or vision impaired in the WBUAP Region find sustainable employment, the Royal Society for the Blind (RSB) on behalf of the World Blind Union-Asia Pacific Committee on Employment & Economic Empowerment (CEEE), ON 24 - 26 June, sent an employment consultant to Malaysia to conduct a job-readiness program.

Brian Dibbins conducted an intensive three-day workshop for

employment personnel in Malaysia & from some ASEAN countries to equip them with the necessary skills they would need to help increase the rate of employment for their clients.

"The aim of my trip," says Brian "is to make sure that the participants in the Job-Readiness Program are prepared and confident to be able to conduct similar workshops for their blind and vision-impaired clients". "This unique program," he went on to say "was designed and adapted from the practices that the RSB Employment Services use to place BVI's in meaningful and sustainable employment."

"We covered techniques for effectively delivering a program for job search to small groups, as well as various placement activities such as skills assessment, identifying appropriate support services and developing action plans that will lead to employment."

The invaluable hands-on training program was run in conjunction with the Malaysian Adaptive Equipment Loan Scheme project, recently secured by the RSB on behalf of the WBUAP CEEE from the Seeing is Believing Innovation fund.

"It was exciting to be able to be a part of this project and to share my experience as an employment consultant to assist in this program," says Brian who has been an employment consultant at the RSB for seven years. "It was great to be able to package up and share all that RSB Employment Services do when placing clients in employment and to be able

to share that with professionals who may not have all of that knowledge and experience."

The Committee on Employment in the National Council for the Blind, Malaysia (NCBM), which is administering the pilot Adaptive Equipment Loan Scheme in collaboration with WBUAP CEEE, expresses its deep gratitude to the Management of RSB for agreeing to send Brian Dibbins to conduct the Workshop. They also express their sincere thanks to Brian for imparting his valuable knowledge on the subject, and for his assurance that he will continue to give his assistance when called upon to do so.

RSB develops adaptive technology training program

Recognising the need for a training program to assist people in the use of a new screen-reading program, Royal Society for the Blind (RSB) Adaptive Technology staff worked with the International Council for the Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI) to develop an industry-endorsed training program.

NonVisual Desktop Access (NVDA) is a screen-reading program that reads text on a computer screen out loud, enabling people who are blind or vision impaired to use a computer. The open-source software can also convert text to Braille and unlike many other screen readers on the market, is free, allowing more people to have access to the life-changing technology.

NVDA is an impressive development in the realms of adaptive technology and is incredibly popular in developing countries, more so than in Australia where the screen-reader of choice is overwhelmingly JAWS. However, it doesn't come without its challenges, specifically in terms of users requiring sufficient training to be able to confidently use the program.

But who trains the trainers that pass on this knowledge and train computer users who are blind or vision impaired living in developing countries? That's where the RSB Adaptive Technology Service stepped in.

"Frances Gentle who is the Pacific Chairperson at the International Council for the Education of People with Visual Impairment identified that NVDA could be distributed throughout Australia and Asia, however, there needed to be a program to teach the program to the teachers," explains RSB Low Vision Centre Coordinator, Andrew Davies.

"From there, RSB Adaptive Technology staff developed the NVDA training program that has become available to organisations in the Asia Pacific region, which will ultimately help people who are blind or vision impaired use the program to its full extent, delivering them the best outcomes to help them connect with the world around them."

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