**EAST WIND**

***Official Newsletter of the World Blind Union-Asia Pacific***

**No. 9**

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**FROM THE EDITOR**

The days fly so quickly especially when we are having great times together. For those who came to Japan to attend our Mid-term Assembly, we thank you very much for spending times with us and sharing your experiences and other resources. I am writing a flashback on our gathering, so that those who were with us can recall the great moments, while those who could not come will have an idea of what it was like.

It is only 6 months ago when we had another excitement: the Regional Seminar on Massage in Seoul, Korea. That was probably one of the largest massage seminars. As for me, I had a great chance to visit our sisters of blindness organization in Korea.

I asked our colleagues in Mongolia and Lao PDR on the updates of their activities under DANIDA Capacity Building Project during the first half of the year 2010.

I think we should be proud of having done quite a lot this year. Let us keep moving forward!

Michiko Tabata: Editor-in-Chief

Editorial Committee: Ivan Ho Tuch Choy

Kevin Murfitt

Kim Mok

**MID-TERM ASSEMBLY FLASHBACK**

The WBUAP Mid-Term Assembly in Chiba / Tokyo, Japan welcomed nearly 250 participants from the Region and within Japan, coming from 22 countries/territories altogether. Here is a brief flashback.

**Friday, October 29:**

The Youth Forum room in the morning was full of enthusiastic participants and welcomed presentations from Mongolia, Vietnam, Indonesia, the Philippines, Australia, Japan etc. One of the issues shared was the access to education, employment and training. The forum agreed on the needs to increase such opportunities, and to activate exchange of information by means of mailing list, newsletter etc.

The Women’s Forum room in the afternoon was full and chairs had to be added so that everyone could sit down. The forum welcomed presentations from Japan, Australia, the Philippines, as well as CRPD workshop report in relation to blind women, DANIDA capacity building project update, and some interesting exchange of experiences about family members’ attempt to heal blindness of their daughters through faith-related practices.

The issues raised during the two forums were also brought to the drafting of the Chiba Statement.

The food served in the Welcome Reception was splendid! We all welcomed messages from each and every country/territory, followed by an amazing entertainment by Mr. Taro Masuda and his colleague.

**Saturday, October 30:**

The opening session had many messages from government agencies in Japan, which is very important for our event because it symbolizes the recognition about out causes by the government. It was a bit long, though. We also had warm welcoming messages from Chuji, the AP President, and Maryanne, our WBU President. The Keynote Speaker, Mr. Katsunori Fujii from the Japan Disability Forum, outline the ongoing disability policy reforms in Japan, and how the disability and blindness community must unite our strong voice to promote the reform and the CRPD implementation.

The first commemorative speech was by Maryanne, the WBU President, elaborating on the ongoing WBU works including employment related initiatives, works on libraries, and capacity building of members for CRPD implementation. Another speaker was Dr. Fred Reid from European Blind Union who shared with us the experiences in Europe to promote access to employment for the blind people who are regarded as “economically inactive”.

The afternoon started with business sessions including reports from Ivan, our secretary general, Kevin, our treasurer, Martine, our women’s committee chair, Mr. Zhu Gang, our massage commission chair, and Monthian, our technology committee chair and link to APCD.

The country report session was fun but in a little bit of rush. Since each presentation had 5 minutes to go, the speakers focused on some of their highlights, while the full details are in their written report. The three sub-regional chairs chaired the session as divided by the sub-region.

The sub-regional meetings after the plenary session was fruitful and each sub-regional had their own features of discussion.

**Sunday October 31:**

The morning started with business sessions. We voted for amendments of WBUAP constitution, some to be consistent with the changes in the WBU constitution, and other for the purpose of facilitating fundraising initiatives at the national or local level. We also saw updates on our quadrennium plan of action, and a great presentation on the upcoming International Conference on Low Vision to be held in Malaysia.

The concurrent sessions were both full of insights and informative presentations. The Capacity Building session features the outline of the DANIDA project going on in the AP Region and reflections on the previous years as presented by our colleagues from Denmark, followed by our friends from LAB and MNFB on their experiences. The audience was deeply moved by the changes the project has been bringing to the blind people of these two countries. The CRPD session welcomed Mr. Takeshita from Japan referring to CRPD and disability policy reforms in Japan, Monthian on insights and ideas for CRPD implementation, and Penny, our CEO, on WBU works for the CRPD implementation and support for the member organizations.

The Employment Symposium in the afternoon was chaired by Grace, our 3E committee chair, and welcomed presentations from our colleagues in Hong Kong about their employment initiatives, Mr. Ryosuke Fujii on the programs for training of massage instructors, and an informative presentation on the employment situation in the Pacific countries. The highlight case when Grace launched on the podium the WBUAP Employment Portal, which will contain information of great value including good practices, tips, and a section to sell products produced by the blind people.　The URL is: <www.wbuap-job.org>

During the closing session, the Chiba Statement was adopted, which will be given at the end of this particle.

The Farewell reception was another big fun and beautiful food. We had great Japanese traditional music, followed by a number of other great singers among our colleagues, a melting pot of talents!

**Monday November 1:**

We took the bus or the train to Sight World, now a well-know exhibition exclusively for the cause of blindness. Our president Maryanne delivered her message of congratulations on the opening of the event, with tape cuts, and participants went out into the hall touching and listening to the latest assistive technologies. Some were shopping so eagerly!.

The ICT Symposium in the afternoon welcomed presentations on the CRPD and the right to access ICT for the blind, some of the latest developments in China, and Japan Braille Library project on ICT training. The heated discussion shows the enthusiasm among blind people toward the development of ICT technologies, which means a lot.

**Sponsorships**

The organizing committee sponsored some of our colleagues from countries with financial difficulties: 2 from Vietnam, 2 from Myanmar, 3 from the Philippines, 2 from Indonesia, 2 from Fiji, and 2 from Papua New Guinea. The 4 colleagues from Lao PDR and the other 4 colleagues from Mongolia were sponsored by the Danish Association of the Blind with funds from Denmark.

**Trivia:**

On Friday and Saturday, we had an unusual and unwelcomed guest: an autumn typhoon! It is not very common to have tropical storms that late in autumn. Hopefully nobody was wet or blown by the strong wind.

Did you know that all the rooms had names of music types, like Rondo, Symphonia, Concerto, Largo etc.? Maybe someone with music expertise can tell us what they actually mean.

Many participants spoke highly of the services the hotel personnel were demonstrating. This is partly due to a JFB seminar on how to accommodate needs of blind and visually impaired guests, which was held early September. The hotel was also happy to have such a precious experience.

**WBUAP Chiba Statement:**

**The following is the statement that was adopted at the end of the closing session Sunday afternoon:**

We the participants at the WBUAP Mid-Term General Assembly in Chiba, Japan, October 31st, 2010,

A: call upon all countries within the Asia Pacific Region to take timely steps towards signing, ratifying, implementing and monitoring the CRPD (Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities),

B: Recognizing that unemployment and economic inactivity is a major source of social exclusion across the world for people who are blind or have low vision, urge countries to take proactive steps to identify, and assist people gain access to meaningful employment on an equal basis with others,

C: affirm the outcome of the Youth Forum, by agreeing to promote activities to strengthen leadership, capacity and networks of young people who are blind or have low vision, for example, by establishing an email discussion list for and about youth issues in the Region.

D: being moved by the enthusiasm and strong determination, expressed by blind women through the Women’s Forum, therefore urge all concerned parties, especially member countries, in the Asia Pacific Region to prepare a statement about strategies being undertaken, or being planned, by member countries to empower blind women within the blindness community and society at large. And further recognize the need to advocate for integrating the mandate of CRPD concerning women with disabilities with mainstream human rights instruments like CEDAW (the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women),

E: Applaud the contribution and collaboration from partners in capacity building of member countries in relation to advancing the human rights of people who are blind or have low vision, for example, governments, international development organizations (such as DANIDA) and civil society organizations at large; and further recommend that any future international development assistance programs, be more disability/blindness inclusive.

F: Place on record our deepest appreciation to the following partners and organizations for the successful outcome of this Mid-Term General Assembly, namely,

1. National Committee of Welfare for the Blind in Japan, Mr. Yoshihiko Sasagawa, Chairman

2. World Blind Union and Ms. Maryanne Diamond, President, and Dr. Penny Hartin, CEO

3. European Blind Union, Dr. Fred Reid and Dr. Philippa Simkiss

4. Danish Association of the Blind, Mr. Mikael Bellers Madsen, Ms. Susanne Koch Andersen

5. All the Assembly speakers, reporters and presenters

6. Sponsors, members of the Organizing Committee, interpreters, volunteers and staff

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**THE 10TH WBU ASIA PACIFIC REGIONAL SEMINAR ON MASSAGE**

**- Meeting New Challenges through Exchange and Raising Self-Esteem -**

**Chapter I**

**The Seminar was Held Sucessfully with Profound Influence**

During May-3rd to May-7th, the 10th WBU Asia Pacific Regional Massage Seminar and its Board of the Directors Meeting concluded successfully in Seoul, Korea. Participants from the Asia Pacific Region got together to take up their works for better conditions and more opportunities for the visually impaired people. They set up a good platform for exchanges and cooperation in the field of blind massage industry.

The conference was held under the leadership of Mr. Zhu Gang, the President of the Hunan Yeahcome Health Care Chain Co., Ltd., who takes charge of Board Chairman of the World Blind Union Asia Pacific Regional Massage Commission for the first time. There were in total 550 delegates who came from 14 countries and regions in this seminar. It was the biggest scale with the largest number of attendance this time, and four languages were available for simultaneous interpretation including Chinese, English, Japanese and Korean.

During the seminar, delegates from different countries/regions carried out lots of discussions such as on “Europe and America Massage Development Trend”. In the section of “Country Report”, various countries and regions shared their latest situation of blind massage, and deepened their mutual understanding.

Mr. Young Hak Yoo, the Vice Minister of Health & Welfare Ministry of the Republic of Korea attended the meeting. He spoke highly of the development of the Chinese Blind Massage industry and invited all participants to visit places like the Korean Blind Union Office, Blind Massage Center, Seoul Blind School etc., which gave us the feeling that the blind activity development is in good conditions in the Republic of Korea. During the conference, one of the Korean media called “East Wind” (directed to the general public and the visually impaired separately, and led by the Korean Blind Union supported by the Korean Government) made an exclusive interview with the Chairman, Mr. Zhu Gang, and showed great interest in the Blind Massage International website.

**Chapter II**

**Exchange & Display, Hand on Health & Energy**

As with the previous seminars, this seminar had conventional programs for internal exchange in the field of massage such as “Plenary Session”, “Country Report” and “Massage Skills Exchange”, and in addition a public exhibition of blind massage to Koreans. More than 20 experts from the Asia Pacific Regional countries attended the exhibition to show different ways of blind massage, new skills, new techniques, and attracted a large number of Seoul citizens visiting and experiencing. The event played a big role in promoting blind massage.

Mr. Que Youming, an expert from the Tuina Dept. of China Changsha Yeahcome Massage Hospital, took part in this seminar too. He met experts from Japan, Korea, Australia, Hong Kong (China) to exchange massage skills,and showed Chinese traditional medical Yeahcome’s Tuina skills. After the massage skills exchange, Professor Huang Haiping, a massage teacher from Hong Kong (China) said that the mainland China has the real medical massage.

**Chapter III**

**Self-esteem and Love, Extended from the Blind Massage International Network**

On the board of directors meeting, Mr. Peng Lei, the assistant of WBUAP Massage Regional Commission Chairman and the director of International Development Management Center of Hunan Yeahcome Health Care Chain Co., Ltd. (China), displayed the Blind Massage International network website to all delegates. This is the first accessible portal website of blind massage industry on the worldwide basis. The website was established by Hunan Yeahcome Health Care Chain Co., Ltd. and China Blind Massage Administration Center on October 16, 2009, based on the proposal of WBUAP Regional Massage Commission. Since the launching, the website has been very popular among blind friends and massage practitioners. It provides a good platform of communication and co-operation to promote the blind massage industry in the Asia Pacific Region.

Japan, Korea, Australia and more than 20 participating countries showed great interest in the Blind Massage International network. Now this website has the Chinese and English version, however, it may not meet the needs of Japanese, Korean, Thai and other language users around the Asia Pacific Region. During the meeting, every country delegate expressed their hope to join the network construction and to have more language versions as soon as possible in order to satisfy the urgent needs of all participants and supporters in the blind massage industry.

**Chapter IV**

**The Meeting Is Not the End But the Beginning of the Co-operation**

During this meeting, Mr. Zhang Mingli, Director Assistant of China Blind Massage Administration Center, gave a report on Asia Pacific Medical Massage Instructor’s Training Course for the Blind and its Curriculum. This program is hosted by WBUAP Regional Massage Commission and organized by the China Blind Massage Administration Center and China Hunan Yeahome Health Chain Care Co., Ltd. It is estimated to start in Changsha city, Hunan Province, China, during April and May, 2011. This program will welcome 15 trainees from member countries of the region for two months training. The trainees will play a positive guiding role in promoting the practitioners, management, education etc. of blind massage after they finish the course. The China Blind Massage Administration Centre and China Hunan Yeahome Health Care Chain Co., Ltd. will sponsor all the expenses including training fees, meals, lodging and local transportation. After completion of the course, each participant will be given a certificate issued by China Blind Massage Administration Center and the WBUAP Regional Massage Commission.

The discussion and vote of the board of directors decided that the 11th WBUAP Regional Massage Seminar will be held in Malaysia and the next Board of Directors Meeting will be heldin Changsha city, Hunan Province, China. Chairman Mr. Zhu Gang welcomes all members of Asia Pacific Region to take part in the meeting in Changsha then.

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**REGIONAL CONTACT WITH KOREAN BLIND WOMEN’S UNION**

**Martine Abel**

**Chair, Women’s Committee**

While in Seoul, South Korea, in May for our face-to-face WBUAP Board & Policy Council meeting, Michiko Tabata and I had the great opportunity of meeting with members of the Korean Blind Women’s Union (KBWU). I embraced the chance as Chair of our Regional Women’s Committee when Michiko, Sub-region Chair of our East Asia area suggested contact.

So, on the evening of 7 May, we were met at our hotel by Lee Kanyoung, Chair of the Korean Blind Women’s Union. Her daughter, Eunhye, acted as translator, as most of the women we met on that occasion were not fluent in speaking English. Eunhye happened to have lived in New Zealand as student a few years ago, so that made one realise just what a small world we’re living in.

We were then taken to a lovely traditional restaurant, especially to try out Kalbi, a typical local dish, consisting out of pork strips, seared at one’s table. One would have preserved vegetables with that. Eunhye, as the only sighted person there on the night, also ended up doing the food preparation, for it had to be done by the dinner guests themselves, as that wasn’t part of what the restaurant’s waiters were doing, so, it’s like a novelty kind of meal, where one would be part of cooking and serving oneself.

The restaurant was also typical Korean in its mere nature as one was seated on cushions on the floor around very low tables. We had to take our shoes off at the restaurant’s entrance and each party were then taken to a private dining facility. On the table in front of us were the cooking utensils and equipment such as the specific hot cooking plate, etc.

We were informed that there are about 1000 members of the KBWU and that it is a national organisation. We exchanged facts around our various countries’ and organisations’ accessibility of government and rehabilitation services and we compared notes on matters pertaining to employment, education, health access, etc.

The Korean women were of the opinion that their access to health services were adequate, but that there is definite room for improvement, especially for women in rural regions. They also reported sufficient access to secondary and tertiary education services, although most of them are actually still choosing to work in the massage field.

Massage used to be a protected occupation for the blind, but it seems as if this has now changed to being an open employment situation, so the women were telling us that their specific job opportunities in that area could be compromised by non-disabled people flooding that market.

The women sounded very keen to become more involved in WBU matters and the registration and programme materials for the upcoming Regional Mid-term Assembly were sent on to them.

We enjoyed a couple of glasses of Kas, Korean beer, which put us all in a relaxed mood, just ready for the weekend and the trip back home for both Michiko and me to return to our respective countries. We’re expressing again a heartfelt thanks to our Korean hosts for providing such an informative and enjoyable end to our Korean visit.

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**PACIFIC-OCEANIA SUB-REGION UPDATE**

Kevin Murfitt

Currently there are five WBU member countries in the Pacific-Oceania sub-region: Australia, New zealand, Fiji, and two special members papua New Guinea (PNG) and Samoa All except Samoa were represented at the Chiba mid-term assembly.

Overall, the pacific region is made up of hundreds of Islands which makes it Very challenging to gather groups of people who are blind or have low vision together except in the larger Islands.

In addition, poverty, lack of recognition of human rights, and poor access to technology such as internet make it very difficult to establish new or potential WBU member countries.

We have an email network of a number of people who are blind or have low vision in the pacific but email also is not yet widely available.

The future opportunities for better rights, access and therefore networks of blind people lie in two areas:

First. Assistance like the DANIDA/DAB /WBUAP capacity building project described elsewhere in this publication. The extension of this project to include a regional coordinator, and more regional perspective such as having people from other countries in the Asia Pacific also benefitting from the learnings of the capacity building training in Mongolia and Laos has great potential to assist those in the Pacific Oceania and more broadly.

In addition more ‘in country’ development assistance for Pacific Oceania countries is important as well.

This is now being made available to Disabled Persons Organizations in the Pacific by partners such as the Disability Rights Fund, AusAid, and through NZ Aid.

Second, Pacific Disability Forum PDF, established over five years ago as a representative and advocacy organization for disabled persons organizations , has over 25 pacific country DPO members.

These DPOs have people who are blind or have low vision as members including some of their leaders.

The PDF has a conference every two years where members are assisted to attend and network. The next PDF Conference is in Auckland NZ next April.

At our sub region meeting during the mid term assembly in Chiba, , Pacific Oceania delegates discussed holding a networking session around the PDF conference with attendees who are blind or have low vision. This function will aim to further identify people who are blind or have low vision in the Pacific and their networks or groups so that we can better assist them get together to assist each other and become potential members of the WBU family.

Other actions from our sub-region meeting included:

* assist DPOs to further develop strategies and communication to encourage participation by people who are blind or have low vision in their DPO activities;
* To promote and assist establish radio for PWD in pacific or just programming on local radio by PWD would be a good communication strategy for people who are blind or have low vision. This is also a project activity in the DANIDA project and the Regional Coordinator will be tasked to distribute learnings from DANIDA project across the region.

We also discussed the International Council for Education of Vision Impaired (ICEVI) Pacific/WBU Pacific-Oceania 2 day workshop in Sydney Jan 2011 being organized by ICEVI Pacific Chair Frances Gentle. 20 Pacific Islanders are being supported by AusAid to attend this workshop that will examine progress and develop an action plan to improve access to education for children who are blind or have low vision in the Pacific region. WBU Pacific-Oceania delegates will attend to assist the workshop.

Finally, the Equipment recycling website is still progressing slowly in engagement by service providers:

Recent donations include:

Talking calculators and Braille slates to Samoa;

CCTV donated to United Blind Persons (UBP) Fiji;

And vision Australia has sent a package of talking books on audio tapes to all Pacific DPOs with an invitation for them to request more.

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**DANIDA PROJECT UPDATES – from Mongolian National Federation of the Blind –**

In 2010, MNFB implemented the following 3 projects:

* Second Mongolian blind women’s forum
* Establishment of FM radio stations in 4 provinces under the branches of MNFB
* Creation of enabling and accessible environment for the blind people

MNFB would like to share experiences and findings which are gained through implementing the projects, and what kind of changes they brought to the MNFB and blind people  
  
**Blind women’s forum**

The Forum was conducted between 9 and 13 of June 2010 in Ulaanbaatar. Blind women from urban and rural areas got together for the second time and discussed the topics such as:

* Establishment of women’ council and sustainable operations
* Fundraising
* Development of project proposals
* Advocacy
* Knowledge about the legislations that affect and impact the blind people

A total of 40 blind women participated in the forum, 23 of them from rural area.

We believe that the operations should not be limited to just one time training, but what has been learned should spread to make it possible for women to utilize their knowledge in their life and to disseminate knowledge to other women. For this purpose, we established a small loan fund of 3000 USD at the Women’s Council of MNFB. The aim of the loan is to increase the household income of blind women, and they are eligible to submit a project proposal for up to 500,000 MNT to be submitted to MNFB’s Women’s Council through the local branches. The Women’s Council will announce the loan opportunity twice a year and select up to 8 proposals each.

**Establishment of FM radio station**

MNFB first established the FM radio station BEST FM 98.5 in order to deliver reading services for the blind people in 2004. The radio station is in successful operation so far and offering its services dedicated for the blind. The operations of the last 5 years have demonstrated the success and importance of having the radio station for the blind, and MNFB gained considerable experience in running the radio station. As of the mid 2009, MNFB is operating its branches in 18 provinces out of a total of 21. Of the total of 18 branches, 12 of them were established under the capacity building project implemented by the DAB for 2007-2009. We have seen pressing need to strengthen and build capacity of the branches for sustainable operation enabling them to have permanent income generation source. Based on this observation, MNFB implemented the project to establish FM radio stations at the branches in Uvurhangai, Dornod and Umnugobi provinces. We have identified several advantages and importance of the radio station including:

* + - * Increasing access to information for the local blind people
      * Increasing public awareness on the blind people and advocate for the favorable decision making
      * Creating an opportunity to be financially sustainable for the branches. so that they could use the income generated from the radio station for other for-the-blind activities

MNFB got the licenses for FM radio station. and work for the establishment of 3 stations started mid June.

**Creating enabling and accessible environment for the blind**

MNFB had no office and so used some rooms of the Enterprise of Blind People up to now.

As the scope of MNFB activity expanded, there was more demand for having its own office. In order to meet this demand, MNFB took initiative and raised funds from the Ministry of Social Welfare and Labor for construction of MNFB office building. The construction started in August 2008.

The new office has a total of 540 square meters of area including office for MNFB President, CEO and staff as well as meeting room, talking book production studio and Braille printing center, a total of 15 rooms. We also constructed a sports hall with 216 square meters of area and a small exercise room for blind athletes. Through the capacity building project, the entire building is equipped with proper infrastructure for the blind people, both inside and outside, for walking and working, in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Mongolia ratified and joined the convention in December 2008. But the obligations stated in the convention are not enforced in Mongolia because the decision makers are not aware. There is no building in Mongolia that is created with the accessibility and infrastructure for persons with disabilities. Therefore, MNFB, as an organization working for the well-being of the blind people, aimed to start and pioneer in this field and created the most favorable and supporting environment for the blind and persons with disabilities in Mongolia, making its new office as a model and demo for others.

Within this framework, we created and installed the wall touch handle for the blind, tactile road and Braille marking in the rooms as well as a sliding door to pioneer the enabling infrastructure. The new building, the model for everyone, is playing key role in raising awareness for working and living conditions of the blind people, and has been used as an advocacy tool for decision makers, to ensure the effective enforcement of the convention in Mongolia.

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**DANIDA PROJECT UPDATES – from Lao Association of the Blind –**

LAB implemented the following 3 major activities as part of the ongoing project:

* Second women’s forum
* Training on human rights
* Leadership training for participants from provincial areas

**Second Women’s Forum**

LAB held its second women’s forum from 20 to 22 January 2010 at the Lao Women’s Union training Center, following the first forum in June 2008. The objectives were:

* To refresh lessons learned about women’s right and gender from the first women’s forum
* To support participants to learn how to vote for proper persons to be members of the Women’s Committee
* To train participants in setting plan of action

The forum was attended by 50 blind and partially sighted women and facilitated by the Director General of Department of Pension, Invalid and Disabilities, the representative from the Lao Women’s Union, and the representative of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare. The group exchanged experiences in their daily lives, the activities conducted in the past 2 years within smaller groups, learned and actually drew up their plan of action, and conducted election on the women’s committee members. Participants also learned the functions of their national women’s union, and LAB tightened its relations with the government by welcoming officers as facilitators. Some of the plans of action written during the forum include leadership and rights training for blind women, support for inclusive education, vocational training in addition to massage training, and sports activities.

**Training on Human Rights & the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

A training on human rights and the rights of persons with disabilities was held from 16 to 18 February 2010, using the Decree on Disabled People in Lao PDR as materials. The Decree was .drafted in 2009 by representatives from the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Lao Disabled People’s Association, and lawyers, and was submitted to the National Assembly for approval. The objectives of the training were:

* To raise awareness of human rights of 30 participants, so that they perceive and become aware of the rights they have
* To enable the 30 participating trainees to convey the information about human rights and the rights of persons with disabilities, to other groups of blind and visually impaired persons in Vientiane Capital and 2 target provinces, Laungpragbang and Savannakhet.

The seminar was attended by 30 blind and partially sighted persons and was facilitated by government officials, representatives from the Lao Disabled Persons Association, and the president of Women’s Committee of LAB. The participants now have better understanding of human rights and will disseminate what they learned to other blind people who were not attending. LAB also succeeded in addressing to the government the need to promote the right to education for the blind people on an equal basis with others.

**Leadership Training for Participants from Provinces**

A training on CBR was held between March 22 to 26, 2010, following a study tour to CBR practices in Cambodia in 2009 that strengthened LAB’s awareness about the need for rehabilitation if provincial chapters are to be extended. The training was attended by 24 blind and partially sighted persons from 6 provinces, as potential leaders for CBR implementation, where materials and information on CBR were also provided. The training covered leadership, advocacy and proposal writing, as well as DAISY, O&M and other issues that are more closely related to daily lives of blind people.

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**NATIONAL ICT ENLIGHTENING ACTION TRAINING COURSE FOR TEACHERS OF BLIND SCHOOLS IN CHINA**

Grace Chan

To further improve the skills and knowledge of teachers of blind schools and education resource centres for the blind in China, three ICT Enlightening Action Training Courses have been conducted in China during the past few years. The duration of the Course is four days. Its aim and objective are:

1. To provide updated information technology for the blind, latest development of IT adaptive equipment and software;
2. Sharing of experience in information technology;
3. An easy to learn English learning system for the blind and
4. Repair and maintenance skills Training for Braille Embosser and Braille equipment.

For the second and third training courses, Mr. Pol Namse, expert on repair of Braille Embosser and Braille equipment from Thailand (recommended by Perkins School for the Blind Regional Representative) and a number of IT experts from Hong Kong have been invited to conduct the training.

On each course we have had about 60 teachers of 40 blind schools from different parts of China attended the course. The teachers were very interested in learning skills to master the usage, repair and maintenance of the Brailler, Embosser, Thermoforming Machine and, in particular, to have a chance to practically repair the equipment on site with the advice of the expert from Thailand. In addition, they also learned the various kinds of software commonly used by the blind as well as adaptive equipment to assist the blind in their knowledge searching and to improve the quality of their lives.

The learning and teaching of English through the internet was an important aspect of the training as blind people would benefit greatly from learning English in order to communicate with the outside world and to make new friends.

The training course has served the purpose of upgrading the IT skills of the teachers, in the teaching of IT and English for their blind students and to manage the education resource centres more competently.

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**WINNERS OF THE WBUAP ONKYO BRAILLE ESSAY CONTEST 2010**

Thank you very much for participating in the 2010 Contest. We received 26 entries from 7 countries - Australia, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Taiwan and Vietnam. The seven winners are as follows:

The Otsuki Prize of US$1,000 went to Jenni Heryani of Indonesia (58 year-old female).

The Excellent Prize of US$500.00 for Category A (aged from 14 - 25 years) went to Ritchell Lim from Australia (14 year-old female).

2 Fine Works of US$200.00 each went to: Deasy Tresnawati Sari of Indonesia (21 year-old female) and Hok Sophorn of Cambodia (22 year-old female).

The Excellent Prize of US$500.00 for Category B (aged from 26 years upwards) was awarded to Mohd. Asri bin Mat Isa from Malaysia (43 year-old male).

2 Fine Works of US$200.00 each for Category b went to Li Sen-Guang from Taiwan (33 year-old male) and Choo Kim Yoon from Malaysia (42 year-old male).

We have just received the good news that the Onkyo Corporation and the Braille Mainichi will continue to sponsor the Contest for 2011 with very little changes to the rules. The announcement will come out on 1 February 2011, but in the meantime, do begin to set up the National Onkyo Selection committees in your respective countries.

The WBUAP Board and Policy Council take this opportunity to thank Mr. Tetsuo Mano who will be retiring from taking charge of the Project at the end of the year. Mr. Mano has been in charge of the Onkyo Braille Essay Contest Secretariat since 2003. We also wish to thank Mr. Kazuhiko Yamaguchi, who will also be retiring as the Project Co-ordinator from the International Association for the Visually Impaired (IAVI) since the Onkyo Braille Essay Contest was expanded to the WBUAP Region in 2003. We extend a warm welcome to Miss Mariko Okada, the Chief Editor of Braille Mainichi, who will be taking over from Mr. Mano, and Mr. Hiroaki Ishiwata, the new Executive Director of IAVI, will take over from Mr. Yamaguchi.

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**COMING UP…..**

**KL VISION 2011:  
THE 10th International Conference on Low Vision**

Date, 20 to 24 February 2011

Place: Kuala Lumpur Convention Center

The Theme of the conference is: “Vision Rehabilitation – Towards Better Living”, and will focus mainly on 1) New Developments in Research & Rehabilitation, 2) Rehabilitation & New Advances, 3) Multidisciplinary Intervention, and 4) Epidemiology in Developing Countries. There will be plenary sessions with exciting speakers, workshops, exhibitions, as well as socializing events.

For further details, visit the official website at:

<http://www.klvision2011.org.my/>

**THE 8TH WBU GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

The WBU Executive Meeting in Melbourne held between November 11 and 13 decided that our next General Assembly will be held in Bangkok, Thailand, between November 12 and 16. November 10 and half day of November 11 will be spared for Diversity Forum. There will be our regional meeting as well.

**CISCO ACADEMY FOR THE VISION IMPAIRED: 2011 1ST SEMESTER COURSES IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY.**

The Cisco Academy for the Vision Impaired is currently taking applications for the first semester of 2011 starting the first week of February. The Academy offers:

ITE1, an introduction to PC repair including: Hardware, installing and maintaining an operating system, Troubleshooting, portable devices, and customer service:

Discovery 1, on home and small business networking, the first of 4 courses that prepare students to take the CCNA certification:

Exploration, a more in depth look at networking, both theoretical and practical for those students who wish to really get their hands into building and designing networks.

 Each class runs for a total of six months, with online lectures. The classes are self-paced so you can finish them in a month, or take the entire semester if desired. The cost for each course is 500 US dollars however; scholarships are available to students who are paying out of pocket that lower the price to $150. Students are required to have good internet access skills and be familiar with their screen reader of choice, or be willing to teach themselves the necessary skills as we go along. Students should be familiar with reading Adobe PDF documents, as they may be encountered while doing research projects. We do not teach basic computer skills. Course content is online, so broadband internet connection is highly recommended. Students should also have a working headset/microphone and be willing to install Skype and Ventrilo, in order to attend lectures and communicate with instructors. Applications will be accepted until 28 January 2011.

For more information on any of our courses or to request an application, please email

[caviinfo@gmail.com](mailto:caviinfo@gmail.com)

You can also visit our website at:

<www.ciscovision.org>

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We Are Waiting for Your Contributions!!

Send in your writings…reports, essays, poems, commentary, just about anything, that you might want to share with your friends and colleagues in the Region.

Your Donations Is Always Welcome!!

Help us make a difference of what it means to be blind. Your donations will help our international blindness movement in particular from our friends in less economically privileged circumstances.

Your generous contribution is very much appreciated. Please note that, following the election of our new Treasurer, we have our new USD account in Australia.

Please direct your payment to:

National Australia Bank

Bank Address: 330 Collins Street , Melbourne, Australia

BSB: 083-004

Account Number: WBUAPUSD01

Swift Code: NATAAU3303M

Name: World Blind Union – Asia Pacific

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