

East Wind No. 28

June 2019

Official Newsletter of the World Blind Union – Asia Pacific (WBUAP)

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

Please visit the World Blind Union – Asia Pacific website

www.wbuap.org

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Editorial by Mary Schnackenberg

I had planned to run four issues of East Wind during 2019. Unfortunately other commitments on my time have delayed this first issue for the year. I very much regret this situation. I am pleased to say that my other work will let me run two more issues for this year, which will come out in September and December.

Again in this issue we travel around our Asia-Pacific region. We learn about an initiative to get the best out of the Marrakesh Treaty in countries that have acceded to it. We hear about the WBU 2020 General Assembly, and more.

My special thanks to all our writers. I look forward to more contributions in time for the September issue.

2019 WBUAP Onkyo World Braille Essay Contest

Move quickly and be in to win cash prizes across two age groups – 14 to 25 year olds, as well as 26 and above.

This braille essay contest is funded by The Onkyo Corporation Ltd. of Japan, a manufacturer of quality audio-visual equipment, and the contest is implemented by the World Blind Union-Asia Pacific (WBUAP) region. The Contest is open to all blind and vision-impaired persons from the ages of 14 years and above in the WBUAP Region. However, the winners of the 2017 and 2018 prizes are not eligible to participate.

Essays are to be sent to the National Onkyo Selection Committee in each country in the region. For more details contact your country's WBUAP organisation. And be quick as essays selected by your country must reach the region's organising committee by 15 July. Prizewinners will be announced in November.

Good luck to each essay writer.

Introducing a network of partners to end the book famine

Dipendra Manocha from the Daisy Consortium writes:

Access to information and publication is one of the toughest challenges in the lives of persons with blindness, low vision or other print disabilities. The issue is extremely important as it has direct impact on education, livelihood and independent living activities. The DAISY Consortium is an international network dedicated to addressing this issue for more than twenty years. Our members around the world produce and distribute braille, audio and electronic textbooks, leisure books, newspapers, magazines and music scores.

Together we are stronger. We are introducing a communication network to facilitate the sharing of information and good practice. The aim of this network is to bring stakeholders together and align our activities with the global vision and strategy. There is no cost to be part of the network.

We hope that many new collaborations, partnerships and research will emerge from this growing family of organizations working on accessible reading for persons with print disabilities. The network will build up a directory of organizations which you may find useful in forging new partnerships. The DAISY Consortium has been delivering training and capacity building projects for many years, and we would be pleased to work with the network partners on funding proposals for ending the book famine for persons with print disabilities in their country.

At a time when many countries are working out how to get the benefits of the Marrakesh Treaty, this network will help in better utilisation of resources, avoid reinventing the wheel, complement each other's efforts and ensure common international standards.

Once the organization joins the communication network, we will receive information and news about accessible reading. You also have the option to join a discussion forum. Whilst we welcome information in all languages, most information will be in English.

Feel free to contact us for any further information and clarification. If your organization is willing to work in this area and wants to join the network, write to us at dmanocha@daisy.org

We are excited to work with you to end the book famine for persons with print disabilities.

Dipendra Manocha dmanocha@daisy.org and your friends at the DAISY Consortium.

From Assistive Technology towards Inclusive Society

Aye Chan Aung (Alice) writes:

There is no doubt that assistive technology plays a pivotal role in the independent living of the blind or visually-impaired people in this technology age. With the recognition of this fact, a team in Myanmar decided to do something about it so that they could contribute somewhat to the inclusive society for all. In this way, the Myanmar Assistive Technology Research and Development (MATRD) Center came into existence.

MATRD was established on 13th January, 2018. It is a team of blind, partially sighted and sighted persons living in Myanmar, dedicated to support the visually impaired people in terms of assistive technology. It includes a project manager, windows apps developers, web developers, android developers, graphic designers and volunteers from universities.

All the activities of MATRD are striving towards a society, where everybody, no matter how differently abled they are, have equal access to education, employment, cultural experiences and educational resources through assistive technology. As a milestone, MATRD has brightened its corner in the development of Burmese text-to-speech software with the cooperation of Sao Mai Center for the Blind (Vietnam) from February to October 2018. Its upcoming activities include developing a talking

dictionary and Myanmar Typing Tutor for the blind, supporting web accessibility for www.mmpwd.org website, localizing Sao Mai Braille Translator into Myanmar, and conducting short computer courses at the schools for the blind.

To sum up, it is still a very long and tough journey towards the inclusive society. Hopefully, MATRD will try its best to pave the way of assistive technology, which is an essential component of the inclusive journey.

May God bless MATRD!

For further information, please contact info@myanmaratc.org.

WBU Officers Meeting

Twice a year the officers of the World Blind Union meet to discuss progress in the WBU at international, regional and local level. The presidents of the six regions of the WBU, including Michiko Tabata, attend these meetings. Michiko has reported back to us. Their most recent meeting was in Athens in May.

Among many other points there was discussion about how to provide more help to the regions to promote their activities. WBUAP does not have its own office and all the time spent on WBUAP activities is voluntary.

The Youth Committee and the Women's Committee also met in person and/or by Skype in Athens. Both Jason Ho and Judy Small attended those meetings.

Women's Committee activities

Judy Small writes:

I attended the WBU Women's Committee meeting held in Athens in May by skype. All members of the Committee were present and there were new women attending following a couple of resignations. There were two women from the youth group who contributed refreshing comments to the discussions. This was the first face-to-face meeting we have had since a series of Skype meetings early in 2018.

The women's survey was completed by around 700 women and had the highest level of participants following the youth survey. Once the last few results are translated from Spanish, there will be more discussion about preparing the report.

We have been asked to make a video of interviews with women leaders in the WBU. Everyone agreed to try to achieve this during the next general assembly in 2020. and this would become a great resource for the future.

The WBU Women's Committee is linked to the work of the International Disability Alliance Women's Committee. The IDA Women's Committee is tasked with insuring that policies, procedures and activities of the United Nations include women with disabilities and work to increase leadership among women with disability focusing in the main areas of sexual/reproductive health rights and reduction of violence against women with disabilities.

Each region was asked to present a report about the work of their women's committee. I reported on the women's forum that took place in Mongolia last September. Since then camps for women and girls have been held in Hong Kong with the aim of empowering girls.

One issue we all agreed on was that it is difficult to get women in our region to connect with each other in our region. So through East Wind, we are trying to reach out to women who we may not ordinarily hear from. I do occasionally hear from women in a couple of our member-countries and I would really enjoy hearing from many more of you. My email address is 4judy2small@gmail.com.

We aim to meet again at the WBU Officers meeting in Denmark later this year.

Over 300 People Enjoyed Blind Citizens Australia's 2019 Convention

Editor's note

Each time I work on East Wind I am reminded about how hard the English language can be to understand. For example, In East Wind, when we use the word "convention" we are almost always talking about the agreement or treaty known as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, or the CRPD for short. Convention can also mean a formal meeting or conference.

Emma Bennison, Chief Executive Officer of Blind Citizens Australia, writes:

Blind Citizens Australia, (BCA), the national representative voice of Australians who are blind or vision impaired held its national convention in Hobart, Tasmania, from 29 to 31 March 2019. Attended by over 300 people in person or via the extensive internet and radio coverage, the event attracted people who are blind or vision impaired, their families and friends as well as representatives from blindness service providers, tertiary institutions and adaptive technology suppliers from Australia, New Zealand and the US.

The theme of our convention, "you can do it your way" was explored through sessions focusing on travel, health, independence, living with additional impairments and diversity. BCA's Blindness Service Provider expectations Policy, which was unanimously endorsed by the convention, highlighted our philosophy of collaboration, consultation and doing it our way.

One of the themes of our convention was the impact of emerging technology on the lives and independence of people who are blind or vision impaired. A session on the Future of Work brought this into sharp focus. In particular, we were intrigued by insights from our keynote speaker, Suman Kanuganti (CEO of Aira) into how people who are blind or vision impaired use technology to solve workplace challenges. In total the weekend featured presentations and exhibits providing information on seven different apps and other programs that apply new technology to aid navigation and other life activities.

Several members were recognised for their contributions to improving the lives of Australians who are blind or vision impaired. Long-time BCA member Martin Stewart was presented with the prestigious David Blyth award for his forthright and tenacious

advocacy. Certificates of appreciation were awarded to Doug McGinn and Sondra Wibberley for their many years of service to BCA and their long records of achievement in the education sector. The Dianna Braun Aspirations Award went to Robyn Bousie for her contribution as a founding member and ongoing contributor to BCA's National Women's Branch.

The weekend wasn't all serious business. Our choir, "Strictly Unconventional", was just one opportunity for friends old and new to enjoy each other's company.

You can listen to audio recordings of convention sessions by visiting our website: www.bca.org.au.

You can also read more about our Convention in the June edition of our quarterly Magazine, "Blind Citizens News", also available via our website. Its Editor, Jonathan Craig, attended his first convention. He observes in his editorial for the June edition:

"From now on, whenever I think about BCA, I will remember the sound of so many of us gathered in one room, all in noisy, enthusiastic conversation. At my first Convention, the most important thing I learned was that advocacy is what we do, but community is who we are."

Reflections From Japan

Editor's note:

In East Wind 23, October 2017, we published two articles about a visit to New Zealand by a group of blind and low vision students from Japan. One article was by Áine Kelly-Costello whose family was one of the New Zealand host families. In February 2019 Áine visited Japan for the first time. She writes:

This year from February 12-27, I was honoured to participate in the FY18 Japan Community Core Leaders Development Programme (CCLDP) as a New Zealand delegate. It was a chance to exchange information, shared challenges and resources with delegates from Finland, Germany and Japan. The programme was for those aged under 40, working in the fields of youth development, older people and people with disabilities--the field I represented.

My thanks to Blind Citizens NZ for nominating me for the opportunity. I brought with me a background in disability advocacy, as well as my lived experience as a disabled person. I went intrigued to learn, and to reflect on the contexts and experiences from other countries, and I share some insights below.

Tokyo - Non-profit Organisations Management Forum - Feb 15-18

The foreign delegates combined with Japanese programme participants and discussed one of three topic areas. Mine was Communication and PR. On the first day together, we visited an organisation running the Tadaima (I'm Home) project. It's about raising community awareness of appropriate and useful ways of interacting with people with dementia, with the aim of reducing the alarmingly high numbers of people with dementia who go missing each year in Japan and aren't found until it's too late. This visit stood out to me because they used theatre or role-plays really effectively to get us to think about what you would do if you were, say, to come

across an older woman who is searching desperately for her husband (who has in fact died several years ago) and who believes she's living in the city she grew up in.

Our group discussions on the subsequent days revolved mainly around the common challenges our non-profits face, and examples of when we've used communication well, or not so well, to tackle them. The most memorable metaphor came from a group who decided that expanding the reach of an organisation was rather like planting seeds. You do so strategically (in season, in optimal light conditions), but even so you can never be entirely certain which ones will really sprout (that is, where your outreach will really catch on).

Oita- programme for the field of Persons with Disabilities - 19-23 Feb

Oita Prefecture, located on Kyushu Island in the southwest of Japan, has a similar population to Auckland, my city in New Zealand. And you definitely know you're out of "big city" mode landing there. At the Usa City Comprehensive Support Center, we learned about Oita's efforts to deliver cohesive services to people with disabilities as they reach retirement age by integrating their existing support with the other services available specifically to older people. We also focused heavily on employment support for disabled people. We saw some great examples of supported employment, particularly at Taiyonoie (Japan Sun Industries). The facility, located within the community, includes joint venture partnerships with brands such as Sony, Omron (electronics), Mitsubishi and Fujitsu. There's also a physically accessible and bustling supermarket that employs a mix of disabled and non-disabled people and is well-used by the community. One recommendation for Japan that came through strongly from Finland, Germany and New Zealand was for support planning and delivery to be centred around the goals and needs of the individual.

We also tried out the sport of Takkyu Volley or sound table tennis. We don't have it in New Zealand but it somewhat resembles Swish in Australia. We played against disabled people from Taiyonoie, some of who were total masters of their game. Let's just say it doesn't usually take long for a pingpong ball to travel the length of a table so it was a real concentration test for me but great fun too!

That was followed up by an excellent discussion on access to sports for disabled people and in particular, how Japan can leverage the opportunity of the 2020 Tokyo Paralympics to put accessibility and inclusion firmly on the public agenda. The theme of wide-spread, appropriate representation of disabled athletes in the media came through strongly, as did the opportunity for volunteers to interact with the athletes.

In terms of accessibility generally, Japan has a Barrier free act, and seems to do well with physical policy measures, like the Braille in the lift. On the other hand, disabled people are still not very visible in Japanese society, nor is disability advocacy. As such, we were informed, levels of prejudice are still high, to the point where facilities for disabled people were continuing to be built in remote areas due to community backlash. I recommended that advocacy feature more prominently in this programme in future so that Japan could learn from the experiences of countries like New Zealand.

The programme overall

I found the trip fascinating, very enjoyable and exhausting. When I asked for information in electronic format, it was consistently provided, on time. I also got to spend a day with a wonderful, inquisitive and caring homestay family, visit a natural

onsen with them, eat an apparently bottomless selection of delicious Japanese delicacies, and in general be treated like royalty for a packed two weeks.

Tactile Ground Surface Indicators

Editor's note

Google published this on 18 March 2019.

Today's Google startup page has an animated graphic of a person with a white cane using tactile pavement markers. The following is the information when you click on the graphic.

Today's animated Doodle celebrates Japanese inventor Seiichi Miyake, whose desire to help a close friend turned into an innovation that drastically improved the way those who are visually impaired navigate public spaces around the globe.

In 1965, Miyake spent his own money to invent tactile blocks (or Tenji blocks as they were originally known) to help a friend whose vision was becoming impaired. The blocks come in two predominant types: one with dots, and the other with bars. The dotted blocks alert the visually impaired when they are approaching danger, and can often be found at the edges of crosswalks and railway platforms. The barred blocks provide directional cues, letting users know that they are following a safe path.

Aside from identifying tactile tiles via a support or white cane, individuals also do so with the help of guide dogs or feeling them through their shoes, as portrayed in other drafts of the Doodle below:

Miyake's tactile blocks were first introduced on a street near the Okayama School for the Blind in Okayama City, Japan on this day in 1967. Their use gradually spread before they and sound guides were made mandatory in the Japanese National Railways a decade later. Since then, tactile paving is now used around the world.

Today's Doodle depicts the Google logo rendered in the style of Miyake's tactile blocks, embossed against the familiar yellow background.

<https://www.google.com/doodles/celebrating-seiichi-miyake>, 18 March 2019.

News From Thailand

Thailand joins the Marrakesh Treaty

Thipyaporn Khempila writes:

On January 28th, 2019, the Director General of the World Intellectual Property Organisation, Francis Gurry received the instrument of accession of Thailand to the Marrakesh Treaty to facilitate access to published works for persons who are blind, visually impaired, or otherwise print disabled at their headquarters in Geneva,

Switzerland. This opens the world of information for Thai blind more widely, and came into force on April 28th, 2019.

The Deputy minister of Commerce, Chutima Bunyaprophasara, the Director General of the Department of Intellectual Property, Thodsapone Danuputra, and the ambassador of Thailand to UN and other organizations in Geneva, Sunanta Kangvulkulkij, were Thailand representatives on this special occasion. Thailand becomes the 49th member of the Marrakesh Treaty. The impact of Thailand's ratification of the Marrakesh Treaty will support blind, visually impaired and print disabled people in Thailand to access more widely the world of information through published works which are reproduced, adapted or copied to become accessible formats for them.

In the preparation to take part as one of the members of the Marrakesh Treaty, Thailand amended their copyright law. The Copyright Act B.E.2561 Vol.4 was revised successfully on November 8th, 2018. After 120 days of announcement on the government gazette, this Act came into force in the Kingdom of Thailand from Marche 11th, 2019. The main content of this latest volume of the Copyright Act amended specially to support the Marrakesh Treaty clarifies that reproduction, adaptation and copying of published works for nonprofit distribution is authorized by Thai or international authorized non-governmental organizations founded to contribute benefits to persons with visual, hearing, physical, intellectual, learning or other types of disabilities. Definitely, these actions are exceptions in the new Copyright Act in order that Thai persons with disabilities have the right to access more information in the accessible formats equally as others in society.

Thailand Celebrates the International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Thiypaporn KHEMPILA writes:

The International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) has been annually determined on 3rd December. In 2018, the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, the Thailand Association of the Blind (TAB) and other DPOs cooperated to celebrate the International Day of Persons with Disabilities in 2018. Their goal was to raise awareness about the rights to equality of people with disabilities. Inspired by the theme for last year "Empowering persons with disabilities and ensuring inclusiveness and equality", this national event was organized at the Chaeng Watthana Government Complex, in Bangkok on December 3rd – 4th, 2018.

Torpong Selanon, president of the Thailand Association of the Blind, brought the TAB team to join the opening ceremony of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2018. The minister of Social Development and Human Security, General Anuntaporn Karnchanarat was the president of the opening ceremony.

During the event, we appreciated and participated in exhibitions dealing with disabilities, and saw products made by disabled people. There were also other spheres focusing on persons with disabilities such as an academic session, and employment and innovation for all.

The TAB team led a variety of activities over the two days. The National Library for the blind and print disabled demonstrated how to use audio books. Products made by the blind included herbal balm, souvenirs, and the launch of “Siam Premium”, a brand of crispy banana. All the bananas in this brand are grown by Thai blind agriculturists. Agriculture is a new growing career that the TAB vocational center is trying to support for Thai blind.

Fundraising Continues for the S2S Studio in Bangkok

Editor's Note:

Thipyaporn KHEMPILA has been sharing news through East Wind of the progress of the blind Thai musicians involved in the Street to Stars (S2S) project. They are fundraising for their own recording studios.

The Darker Sky – Shining Stars Charity Concert by S2S Fly High with the Nung Len Band was another fundraising event for the studios. The Thailand Association of the Blind Music Academy Foundation (TABMAF) and S2S artists this time worked with the Nung Len band, a Thai indie music band, on November 11th, 2018 at the Bangkok Art and Culture center.

The S2S music artists and Nung Len band performed their show on stage with no limits of their music abilities. The group of painters “Bangkok Sketchers” also created painting pieces inspired by this concert and donated income from the sales towards building the studios.

We hope that the dream of our blind music artists will come true soon.

UN establishes 4 January as World Braille Day

In the WBU e-Bulletin January 2019, President Dr. Fredric K. Schroeder wrote:

Through the tireless efforts of Dr. Aubrey Webson, UN Ambassador for Antigua and Barbuda, on December 17th, 2018, the United Nations officially established January 4 as World Braille Day. World Braille Day brings attention to the right and ability of blind and partially sighted children and adults to live productive integrated lives. Supported by the Marrakesh Treaty and the Orbit Reader 20, World Braille Day stands as a call for social justice for blind and partially sighted people everywhere.

Now, it is up to us. We must use World Braille Day as an opportunity to focus the attention of governments, schools and the public on the need to expand access to literacy for blind and partially sighted children. With a foundation of true literacy, blind and partially sighted children can learn as others and grow up able to take their place as productive members of society.

Each day, each month, each year, together we move closer to full and equal opportunity. The challenges remaining before us are daunting, but, no matter the difficulty, together we have and will continue to change what it means to be blind.

2020 WBU-ICEVI General Assemblies

Dates: 19-24 June 2020

Venue: Marriott Hotel, Madrid, Spain

The World Blind Union (WBU) and the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI) will be holding their third Joint General Assemblies in Madrid, Spain on 19-24 June 2020. The Joint General Assemblies conducted in Bangkok (2012) and Orlando (2016) highlighted the synergy between WBU and ICEVI and we are together again, this time with ONCE, promoting the rights of persons with visual impairment.

The host organisation of the 2020 General Assemblies is ONCE, the National Organisation of the Blind in Spain. ONCE is a well-respected partner of WBU and ICEVI, with a staff of over 70,000 and extensive experience in organising international events. ONCE has appointed a dedicated team to address every issue to ensure that this global event is a great success.

The broad theme of the General Assemblies is “World Blind Summit: What it means to be Blind and Visually Impaired”.

ONCE is developing a dedicated website for the General Assembly which will be in operation in early July 2019. The details of the program schedule will be posted on the General Assemblies website and also the websites of WBU and ICEVI.

Are You on Toronto's Mailing List?

We strongly encourage you to get on to the World Blind Union email list to receive the quarterly e-news bulletins and position statements. If you're not already seeing these in your inbox, email info@wbu.ngo.

WBU has its own website at www.wbu.ngo and is also available on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. If you follow social media you will find the links on the WBU website, and much more news besides.

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Upcoming Dates for East Wind

Here are the dates for the next two issues of East Wind. Please can you put these dates in your diaries so you can get your news to the Editor in good time.

Issue No. 29 is due in September 2019. Please send your news by 31 August.

Issue No. 30 is due in December 2019. Please send your news by 30 November.

We may edit submissions due to space limitations. Please send your contributions to Mary's email address: mary@aicomms.co.nz.

You should also check out our website www.wbuap.org. If you go to our home page you can sign up to receive updates from our website direct to your inbox or use our RSS feed.

That concludes this issue of East Wind No. 28, June 2019.