

East Wind No. 34

April 2023

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

<https://wbuap.org/>

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Editorial

Mary Schnackenberg writes:

Since we last wrote to you in May 2021 we held the Quadrennial Regional General Assembly in June 2021. Our new Board and Policy Council is now working hard on behalf of members in this region. We are pleased to bring you news of the officers and members of the region's Board and Policy Council and let you know what we have been working on over the last almost two years. We have special news about a member of our Board and Policy Council who is now a member of parliament for his country. The date and place for our Mid-Term Regional General Assembly have been agreed. And we have some good articles for you as well.

Keeping your membership details up to date

Mary Schnackenberg writes:

One challenge we have struggled with is keeping up to date the membership list for the region.

The head office of the World Blind Union is in Toronto, Canada. When member organisations pay their subscriptions to join or rejoin the WBU, that money goes to the Toronto head office. Names and contact details of WBU member organisations are on the Toronto head office website.

Please check if the details of your organisation are correct by going to our regional page on the Toronto website at

<https://worldblindunion.org/members-and-partners/regions-and-countries/asia-pacific/asia-pacific-national-members/>.

If you find an error, please ask the person in your organisation who has the authority to contact the WBU head office to fix the error.

Please remember that there are two types of people who should be listed for each organisation. One group of people are voting delegates who include WBU Life Members. The other group of people are our administrative support. Please make clear which names are WBU Voting Delegates. For an example of layout of your organisation's entry, take a look at the list of Board and Policy Council members at the end of this newsletter.

If you have additions, deletions or other corrections to make about your organisation's entry, please email the World Blind Union Toronto office at info@wbu.ngo.

Our region's leaders

Mary Schnackenberg writes:

In June 2021 at our Regional General Assembly we elected six of the seven members to the region's Board. At that time we had not received a nomination for the

position of Treasurer. Later, the voting delegates in our region, through votes via email, elected a Treasurer. The members of the WBUAP Board are:

- Regional President: Mr. LI Qingzhong (English name Peter), People's Republic of China (WBU Voting Delegate)
- Vice President: Mr. Jose M. ROBREDO Jr (English name Butch), the Philippines (WBU Voting Delegate)
- Secretary General: Mr. HO Ka-leung (English name Jason), China Hong Kong
- Treasurer: Mr. Thomas BRYAN, New Zealand (WBU Voting Delegate)
- Three Representatives to the WBU Executive Committee
 - Ms. Helen FRERIS, Australia (WBU Voting Delegate)
 - Dr. Nantanoot SUWANNAWUT (English name Apple), Thailand (WBU Voting Delegate)
 - Mr. Tetsu TAKEI (English name Tony), Japan (WBU Voting Delegate)

Supporting the region's Board is the Policy Council. Members are:

- Chair North-East Asia sub region: Mr. Zagdsuren BOLDSAIKHAN, Mongolia
- Chair South-East Asia sub region: Dr. Nantanoot SUWANNAWUT (English name Apple) Thailand (WBU Voting Delegate)
- Chair Pacific Oceania sub region: Mr. Benjamin (Ben) CLARE, Australia
- Chair Women's Committee: Ms. Yamin OHNMAR, Myanmar (WBU Voting Delegate)
- Chair Youth Committee: Mr. HO Ka-leung (English name Jason), China Hong Kong
- Chair Massage Commission: Mr. WANG Yongcheng, People's Republic of China (WBU Voting Delegate)
- Chair Employment Committee: Mr. CHOI U lok, China Macau (WBU Voting Delegate)
- Chair Environment and Transportation Committee: Mr. Iyehezekiel PARUDANI, Indonesia (WBU Voting Delegate)
- Chair Human Rights Committee: Ms. WU Jing (English name Crystal), People's Republic of China
- Chair Technology and Consumer Products Committee: Mr. WONG Yoon Loong, Malaysia (WBU Voting Delegate)
- ICEVI representative (International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment): Ms. Robyn MCKENZIE, Australia
- Communications: Ms. Mary SCHNACKENBERG, New Zealand

Upcoming WBU Executive Committee Meeting

The next meeting of the WBU Executive Committee is taking place in Wellington, New Zealand. Dates are from Monday 29 May to Friday 2 June 2023. The venue with accommodation is the Brentwood Hotel which is close to Wellington Airport.

The Asia Pacific region's representatives are the President and the three representatives from the Board listed above. Observers are welcome. There may be meetings of subcommittees and networks.

If you wish to observe, contact the Chief Executive of Blind Citizens New Zealand, Rose Wilkinson. Her email is wilkinson@blindcitizensnz.org.nz.

Mid-Term Regional General Assembly

Mary Schnackenberg writes:

The World Blind Union holds its General Assembly once every four years. About half way between each General Assembly this region holds its Mid-Term Regional General Assembly (MRGA). We held our last MRGA in 2018 in Ulaan-Baatar, Mongolia.

We invited the organisations in our region to put in a proposal to host the next MRGA. For the first time since the region was established, we received two proposals. At its meeting on 12 March 2023 the WBUAP Board and Policy Council reviewed the applications and made its decision.

We are very pleased to announce that the Mid-Term Regional General Assembly will be held in Phuket, Thailand. The dates are from Monday 27 to Wednesday 29 November 2023. Our hosts are the Thailand Association of the Blind. We thank them most sincerely for offering to organise the MRGA for the WBU Asia Pacific region. More details of programme, registration and costs will be posted soon.

We very warmly thank the other organisation for putting in its proposal.

Visually impaired delegate has inclusive vision for country

Xinhua | Updated: 2023-03-14 08:17

Due to visual impairment, Wang Yongcheng cannot see the magnificent interior of the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, but that does not stop him from navigating the gargantuan building to pursue his ambitions.

A newly elected deputy to the National People's Congress, China's top legislature, Wang is working to represent China's 85 million people with disabilities during the country's most important legislative and democratic event.

"My mission is to amplify the voices of people with disabilities, and make suggestions to help resolve their issues," says Wang, also vice-chairman of the China Association of the Blind.

The "two sessions" are the annual meetings of the national legislature and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the country's top political advisory body. The event has gathered thousands of national legislators and political advisers to review government reports and other legal documents, and discuss issues of public interest.

Wang has brought two suggestions to this year's NPC gathering, including one on the licensing of blind masseurs and their clinics.

China has issued licenses to tens of thousands of people with partial or full sight impairment to recognize their "medical masseur" profession as a way of improving their incomes. After research among practitioners, Wang found that in reality, these licenses are often unrecognized by the country's medical system, leading to difficulties in the registration of many such massage parlors.

Wang thus proposed the reform of the digital registration system for blind masseurs and clinics to the National Health Commission and other relevant agencies.

"Resolving their job registration issues can help more people with visual impairments secure stable jobs, thus consolidating their gains in the battle against poverty," he said in a speech during an NPC group discussion.

Wang's second suggestion concerns the provision of large-font textbooks for students with visual impairment who are enrolled in regular schools.

The lawmaker says discussions with other deputies and officials, who sat in at the event, had helped him improve his proposals. "The NHC officials have brought back my suggestion on blind masseurs, and I have exchanged contact information with the NPC organizers so that they can brief me on the handling of my proposal regularly," he says.

"Good suggestions from the public can be channeled easily and result in solutions to resolve people's problems. This is what the whole-process people's democracy looks like in my opinion," Wang says.

After the conclusion of the major political season, Wang will return home with the latest information on positive policies for people with disabilities, and he plans to engage in campaigns to raise policy awareness.

The NPC deputy testified to the steadily improving living conditions of this population group, thanks to continuous attention and increasing investments from the Party, state and society.

"During the NPC session, I was offered a Braille computer in my hotel room and a barrier-free car took me to and from the Great Hall of the People. The conference secretariat made a call to establish my needs so that I could perform my duties with ease," he says.

The report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, held in October, pledged to improve the social security and service systems for people with disabilities, and to promote the comprehensive development of related programs.

"I will convey to my friends with disabilities that the entire country is lighting the path for us," Wang says. "In the meantime, we're all contributors to China's construction of a great modern socialist country."

Editor's note

Our sincere thanks to Michiko Tabata who brought the above article to our attention. Mr. Wang, we all congratulate you on this unique achievement. We believe you are the first-ever blind person to be elected as deputy to the National People's Congress in Beijing. You also serve on the WBUAP Board and Policy Council as the Chair of the Massage Commission. Here's the link to the article:

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202303/14/WS640fbd1da31057c47ebb43f3_2.html.

A Brief History of Chinese Braille

Editor's Note: Crystal is a blind musician who, over several years, has divided her time between her homeland and Sweden. She is now the Chair of the Human Rights Committee of the WBU Asia Pacific Region and serves on the Board and Policy Council of this region.

Jing Crystal Wu writes:

Hill Murray Institute for the Blind, China's first school for the blind and visually impaired was founded in Beijing in 1874 by British missionary William Hill Murray (1843-1911). He introduced to China the six-dot Braille system created by Louis Braille of France.

Later, with the help of some foreign missionaries, a Chinese teacher for the blind (whose name I've not been able to verify) worked out a Beijing dialect-based Chinese Braille with a total of 408 syllables. This version drew on the Braille letters in the English language and used the phonetic sequence adopted by Kangxi Dictionary (a 42-volume Chinese dictionary compiled during the reign of Kangxi in the Qing Dynasty). Hence, this earliest version of Chinese Braille was called Kangxi Chinese Braille, or Beijing Chinese Braille, or "408" for short.

In 1897, Yue Aimei, a female missionary whose nationality was not known set up a school for the visually handicapped in Fuzhou. To facilitate the teaching, she adopted Pin Yin (the Chinese phonetic alphabet) to make up a Fuzhou dialect-based Braille--Fuzhou Chinese Braille. This version was finalized in 1920 which comprises 53 dot scripts and 7 tone marks, as well as some forms of abbreviation. An abbreviation is highlighted by a blank cell to both its left and right in writing, which was how Chinese Braille worked in the earliest days whenever separated Chinese characters need to come together to show a semantic meaning.

In 1900, British female missionary Miss Ganland figured out, on the basis of Chinese Pin Yin, a version of Braille for writing down Nanjing dialect, widely known as "Xin Mu Ke Ming". Shanghai School for the Blind, founded in 1911, used this version for teaching and printing the textbooks for primary education. Later, schools for the blind in other places followed suit. In the late 1920s, Dr. Wang Xiangyuan, a teacher for the blind in Shanghai, improved Xin Mu Ke Ming with tone marking adopted by Kangxi Chinese Braille to create the two-cell format, which was well received for a while among the blind population in Shanghai.

Before 1949, there has been a variety of dialect-based Brailles used in different regions across China, including Cantonese Braille, Hakka Braille, the one based on five-cell vowels and the ones mentioned above. These versions with exclusive ways of spelling were usually confined to certain regions and hard to be extended nationwide. As a result, research on Chinese Braille has started since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 in a bid to standardize the use of Braille for the blind and visually impaired in China. With the concerted effort by Huang Nai and his colleagues at Department for Educating the Blind of Chinese Ministry of Education, the New Scheme on Chinese Braille was drafted in 1952. The Scheme proposes a 52-letter Braille system modeled on Xin Mu Ke Ming, which, based on the language used in northern China, adopts the pronunciation of Beijing dialect, abbreviations for groups of semantic meaning, and tone marks for homophones and uncommonly used words. After the Scheme had been approved by the national

authorities by the end of 1953, the blind and visually impaired in the Chinese mainland finally had their unified written language.

To date, the New Scheme on Chinese Braille, or popular Chinese Braille as it is called, has been prevailing in the Chinese mainland for more than 70 years. Yet the blind population in Taiwan, Hong Kong SAR and Macao SAR are still using dialect-based Brailles. For example, Cantonese Braille is widely used in Hong Kong and Macao, while a slightly revised version of Xin Mu Ke Ming is commonly used in Taiwan. As Hong Kong SAR government is promoting the use of Mandarin Chinese, the visually handicapped there are encouraged to learn the popular Chinese Braille.

At the moment, a new version of General Chinese Braille stands ready for trial use. This version features strict rules on tones, tone marks and abbreviations. Every Chinese character is given a tone mark, thus the long-standing problem of shortage of tones in Chinese Braille that leads to inaccurate pronunciation has been fixed. The General Chinese Braille represents the core interest for the Chinese blind population in their language usage. It will be the fundamental language tool in education of the visually handicapped in China.

I Can See Clearly Now

Mary Schnackenberg writes:

My thanks to Bill Jolley of Melbourne for bringing this book to my attention.

I Can See Clearly Now: Understanding and Managing Blindness and Vision Loss is a very helpful read by Cameron Algie.

Self published in Australia in 2021, the book charts the lessons learned by the author as he deals with his low vision. After a successful career in law he ran peer support groups for 14 years at vision Australia. Here he shared his own insights but also learned from everyone who shared their experiences during the peer support groups.

The book begins with an exploration of "Blindness and the Many Faces of Grief". Then it guides the reader through a wide range of strategies for dealing with the practicalities of daily life for people with low vision. Experiences the author draws on are applied to help teenagers and those later in life dealing with schooling, employment, unemployment and more. Guidance is given about daily living skills in and around the home and out in the community. We are introduced to today's technology solutions. This book will be very helpful for families, friends and employers in understanding that vision loss is not to be feared. It's a thoroughly modern read published just two years ago.

Further details of this book can be found on: www.icanseeclearlybooks.com

The book is available on Amazon in both soft cover copy for approximately \$30 Australian dollars, and e format for Kindle users for approximately \$12.50 Australian dollars. Prices vary depending upon currency variations and Amazon discounts.

The book can also be found on Booktopia and as an E format on Apple ibooks.

ISBN Numbers are as follows:

Paperback: 978-0-6452041-1-7

Ebook: 978-0-6452623-0-8

Hardcover: 978-0-6452623-2-2

The passing of Mr. Rakesh Chand

Setareki Macanawai, Chief Executive Officer of Pacific Disability Forum writes to the Pacific Disability Forum email list:

It is with deep sorrow that I share with you the untimely passing of one of our disability champions here in Fiji and the Pacific, Mr Rakesh Chand. He was also the husband of our Human Rights and Gender Advisor, Ms. Angeline Chand, and father to Mr. Alvis Chand. The late Mr Rakesh Chand died at home on 30 December 2022. Rakesh, as we know him, is a founding member of the United Blind Persons of Fiji and served on the Board of Fiji Disabled Peoples Federation as well as Pacific Disability Forum.

Again, we have lost yet another of our disability champions in the Pacific, a gentle giant of a man, who I had the greatest pleasure of knowing, working with and respecting for the past 40 years!

Editor's Note: I also was privileged to have met Rakesh several times along with his wife, Angeline and their son, Alvis. Rakesh served the blind community not just as a leader but also as a role model. He worked as a telephone adviser at one of the banks in Suva, using his screen reader with speech and braille to look up the information that callers needed from the bank's databases. He walked the talk of what can be achieved by blind people in the employment field.

New and Returning WBUAP Members in the Pacific

Ben Clare writes:

While the Pacific region has traditionally lacked representational members at the WBU, at least during the past 15 to 20 years, this is changing as new blindness advocacy groups are forming and others are returning to the fold.

Returning after some years of absence is the United Blind Persons of Fiji, an organisation that has been in existence for some 40 years and which is at the forefront of issues pertaining to people who are blind in Fiji. The organisation's membership is growing steadily and is working on issues such as inclusive education, gender equality and increased knowledge of Braille and assistive technology across Fiji. UBP is very happy to be a full member of WBU once again and will make a valuable contribution to the united voice moving forward I'm sure.

In the Republic of Kiribati, a remote island nation spread across the central Pacific, a new blind association has been formed. Known as the Kiribati Association of People who are Blind and Vision Impaired (KABVI) and boasting a membership of over 50 despite the country's small population, this association is set to join the world in working on issues pertaining to blind people with a robust board of directors and well respected advocates steering the ship. The association will work within WBUAP and should be formalised members in the coming weeks.

These organisations join Tonga, Samoa and with Solomon Islands looking to join their new association shortly and Papua New Guinea's imminent return, a Pacific voice in the WBU is only growing stronger.

Editor's Note: Ben Clare writes more about literacy through braille in the Pacific region in his article UEB in Oceania, which is in Issue 10 of the Newsletter of the International Council on English Braille, March 2021, available at <https://iceb.org/PR.html>

7th Pacific Regional Conference on Disability

Ben Clare Writes:

This biannual event was held in Nadi, Fiji from 27 February to 3 March 2023. It is the main cross disability event in this region, attracting close to 200 delegates, partners, supporters, donors and others working in the disability sector from all regional countries and globally. The conference is organised by the Pacific Disability Forum, a regional umbrella of member organisations of people with disability (OPD's from all Pacific regional countries, including colonial territories of France, United States, Australia and New Zealand with representation from Australia and New Zealand proper in addition to external territories. The PDF has been in existence since 2002 and is funded by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT who also fund the staging of the biannual conference, sponsoring delegates and conference logistics. The theme of this year's event was Nothing without us - Deepening partnership for an inclusive and equitable Blue Pacific Continent for persons with disabilities.

The Pacific Disability Forum enjoys consultative status with the United Nations and sits on various committees within the organisation. The PDF can be accessed via their Facebook page or website: <http://www.pacificdisability.org>.

South Pacific Educators in Vision Impairment Biannual Conference

Ben Clare writes:

South Pacific Educators in Vision Impairment (SPEVI) is an association of teachers of people who are blind, low vision and-or additional disabilities, parents, researchers, schools, medical practitioners and individuals who are associated with the education of these students and who live in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific. Associate membership from outside the region is welcome. SPEVI has been in existence for more than 60 years and its biannual conference, always held during the January southern hemisphere summer holidays is widely anticipated and well attended.

This year's conference, organised by SPEVI New Zealand was held entirely online and more than 20 separate presentations took place between 18/20 January 2023, touching on a wide range of topics including Braille music, orientation and mobility,

mathematics, the latest in assistive technology and presentations from parents. The theme for this online conference was Cultivating New Futures Together: Growth for Life.

While the conference primarily focused on the Pacific region, attendees from outside the region were very welcome and indeed, some presentations were from professionals in Europe, the US and Asia. Officially opening the conference on 18 January was none other than WBU's amazing President, Martine Abel-Williamson.

You can find out more about the SPEVI organisation and the conference by going to the website: <http://www.spevi.net>.

Marrakesh Treaty countries grow in our region

Mary Schnackenberg writes:

Ninety-four countries have joined the Marrakesh Treaty, according to the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO). This treaty permits people with a print disability and the organisations who support them to produce materials in accessible formats without the need to obtain permission from publishers. There are good protections to guard against abuse of the treaty and the publishers' works.

In our region, the countries who have joined since the last issue of East Wind in May 2021 are:

the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam;
Malaysia; and
the People's Republic of China.

Warm congratulations to each country in our region who has committed themselves to this treaty. We look forward to seeing more accessible format titles being shared with all print disabled people around the world.

Updates from the Philippines

Contributed by Chairman Jose Ching Ranola

The Philippine Blind Union, Inc. (PBU) is a duly recognized and accredited national federation of persons with visual impairments and the sole affiliate member of the World Blind Union in the Philippines. Since the start of the pandemic, PBU has been helping persons who are visually impaired to cope with the challenges imposed by the so-called new normal.

At the onset, we immediately sought solutions on how to assist blind masseurs who lost their jobs and means of livelihood due to the social distancing requirement to prevent the spread of Covid-19 infections. Initially, PBU partnered with ATRIEV Inc. a IT training Center which provided online, digital training on digital business basics training for blind masseurs already familiar with the internet so they may start doing small online businesses. Those who successfully completed the training and prepared business plans for small businesses were provided by PBU with small start-up money for their business enterprises.

In the course of our meetings and interviews with masseurs interested in being part of the project, we noted that some masseurs have business or livelihood project ideas that could already be implemented without the project proponents going thru the digital training program.

Examples:

a) A masseur who had started providing massage service in his own home where the customer had to lie down on the floor. The masseur simply needed a massage bed to make the massage service more comfortable to attract more customers. A massage bed only costs as much as the digital training.

b) A masseur who had started selling limited amount of homemade native rice cakes, which allows her to make a net profit of one hundred pesos daily or \$5 per day, was helped with a small grant of 3 thousand pesos or \$60 to enable her to expand her produce and easily more than double her daily income. This program was further extended to our Visually impaired members who were not engaged in the massage industry, benefiting 125 persons who are blind and visually impaired.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the Philippine government decided to cancel all face-to-face classes for the protection of children, students and school personnel from getting COVID-19 infections. With this government directive, the Department of Education developed and implemented alternative modes of delivering educational services for learners with disabilities thru distance or online modalities.

In the course of our various virtual meetings with parents, educators and leaders of organizations for persons with disabilities, we discovered that many students with visual impairments lack appropriate devices to access lessons and learning materials. This led Philippine Blind Union to provide high school students with accessible smart phones with screen readers, magnifiers and other apps that allowed them to access learning materials provided by their schools. In addition, Philippine Blind Union collaborated with bookshare benetech which is an on line library catering to all persons who are blind or print impaired by providing access to 1 million accessible books thru their smart phones.

Philippine Blind Union was able to provide 170 units of accessible smart phones to qualified students with visual impairment. All these endeavors were made possible thru funding assistance from Free the Children Japan and collaborations with other organizations for Persons with Disabilities in the Philippines namely, ATRIEV IT Center for the Blind, Deaf Blind Support Philippines, Parents Advocates for Visually Impaired Children, Resources for the Blind and Bookshare.

On March 11, 2022, Republic Act 11650 was approved and signed into law. The Act specified a Policy of Inclusion and Services for Learners with Disabilities in Support in Inclusive Education, Establishing Inclusive Learning Resource Centers for Learners with Disabilities in all School Districts, Municipalities and Cities, Providing for Standards, appropriating funds for them, and For Other Purposes. This law states that all public schools nationwide are required to identify learners with special needs and provide these learners with free basic and quality education. It also mandates that all cities and municipalities have at least one Inclusive Learning Resource Center (ILRC). An ILRC is a physical or virtual center that provides teaching and learning support through appropriate, accessible, and gender-sensitive materials.

Consultations with the stakeholders concerned are currently being conducted by the government Technical Working Group in drafting the corresponding Implementing Rules and Regulations.

In the meantime, in cooperation with several private educational institutions and academicians, Philippine Blind Union is conducting experimental studies on how to optimize the potential of our college students who are visually impaired in terms of providing and institutionalizing-support services for them. Finally, the Philippine Blind Union aspires to be able to sustain our efforts towards the realization of a fully inclusive education for persons who are visually impaired thru more international collaborations and funding assistance.

Philippine Blind Union Lines Up 5-Point Program for 2023

Led by Board of Trustees Chairman Jose Ranola, President Butch Robredo, Vice President Victor Rescober, Secretary General Ely Dela Paz and Treasurer Bong Garcia, the Philippine Blind Union has lined up a full packed 5 Point Program for 2023 for the Philippine Blind Community and its members all in collaboration with various partners and government support agencies.

1. Education

After completing its project with Free the Children Japan of providing 170 free smartphone devices loaded with Bookshare E-Library subscriptions to students all over the Philippines, it conducted a youth summit for a meet and greet briefing of its Junior Members which was subsequently followed by a culture exchange with Japanese students in Jan 21, 2023 in collaboration with Free the Children Japan. 20 students from Japan and 10 students from the Philippines shared their life experiences in the different breakout rooms.

As part of its support for a wholistic education program, in the works is also a Braille Reading and Writing Contest to be held during White Cane Month of August 2023 and quarterly orientations on various Assistive Devices and Sensitivity Training for Parents, Teachers and Guides who provide services for the blind community.

2. Livelihood & Employment

The Philippine Blind Union continues to connect Philippine Blind Community to as many opportunities open not only for education but also livelihood and employment. After completing its project of providing technical skills to the massage entrepreneurs displaced by the pandemic and Micro Loan Grants in 2021 and 2022 to qualified entrepreneurial members, it now plans to do Virtual Orientations on Employment Opportunities and Work From Home Jobs for members where it will be inviting employed Blind and Low Vision members to talk on the upskilling needed to qualify for such Hybrid jobs.

3. Health

In cooperation with the Persons With Disabilities Office in the 17 Regions of the Philippines, it will post a PBU Volunteer Coordinator who will assist in serving the needs of Persons with Visual Disabilities in the Centers.

It has also teamed up with doctors who operated on 400 cataract patients in Naga City this February.

4. Public Awareness

August 6, 2023 will be the Philippines White Cane Walk slated at the Quezon City Memorial Circle in the Philippines. As a full month celebration, PBU will conduct activities covering its 5 Point Support Programs for the Blind communities in the country. Among the main sessions slated for this month will be some on the use of Assistive Devices and Technologies.

Given that the country signed up to the Marrakesh Treaty in 2019, PBU will also conduct Public Awareness Orientations on the need for building resources of Accessible Content such as documents, books, magazines and newspapers with the aid of new technology. On a quarterly basis in cooperation with technology partners Benetech – Bookshare, it will conduct an Accessible Content Orientation workshop for the general public targeting content creators like authors, publishers, teachers, government workers and corporates among others. PBU also advocates with various partners led by Resources for the Blind for the use Audio Description for movies and related video materials for general entertainment.

5. Culture, Music and Sports

In cooperation with the Persons with Disabilities Office Resource Centers all over the Philippines, the PBU also accepts donations of adaptive game boards such as chess boards, dominos and goalballs for the use of PWDs & VI Members who visit the centers.

Members of the Board and Policy Council, World Blind Union – Asia Pacific

The list of countries and organisations in the WBUAP region is on the Toronto website at

<https://worldblindunion.org/members-and-partners/regions-and-countries/asia-pacific/asia-pacific-national-members/>.

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Next issue of East Wind

Issue No. 35 is due in July 2023. Please send your news by 30 June.

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

You should also check out our website <https://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. 34, April 2023.