

NCBM OUTREACH



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President

S. Kulasegaran

Editor

Godfrey Ooi Goat See
B.A. (Hons.), Dip. Ed.

Produced by

The National
Council For The Blind,
Malaysia

94-B Jalan Tun Sambanthan
Brickfields
50470 Kuala Lumpur

Tel : 603-2273 5508,
603-2272 4959

Fax : 603-2272 4960

E-mail: ncftb@po.jaring.my

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SPECIAL ANNOUNCE- MENT

Readers are reminded that their contribution of articles, suggestions and jokes are most welcome for inclusion in "The NCBM Outreach". However, please note that it would be very helpful to the Editor if such contributions could be submitted either on diskette or on single-sided braille pages to facilitate editing.

For details of payments, please see the last page.

**IF YOU KNOW
OF ANY BLIND
PERSON NEEDING
REGISTRATION FOR
EDUCATION OR
REHABILITATION,
PLEASE CONTACT
US IMMEDIATELY**

**NCBM
Tel: 03-2272 4959
03-2272 1442**

**MAB
Tel: 03-2272 2676**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. MAB EXECUTIVE TRAINEE SCHEME

Blind graduates are welcome to take part in the MAB Executive Trainee Scheme. This scheme was originally introduced in 1974 but it has now been revised in order to make it more effective in meeting the needs of blind graduates.

For the first month, the trainee will gain exposure to all or most of the services of MAB. The objective is to let them have an overview of the work that is being done by MAB. If found suitable, the trainee will be able to choose to focus his or her practical training in one of the services of MAB for the next five months.

The allowance will be RM600 per month. To obtain the application forms, please contact Lee Lee Goh at tel no. 03-22722677 ext. 29.

2. EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE TO THE BLIND FOR FURTHER EDUCA- TION

The MAB Golden Jubilee Education Fund was launched in November 2001. It was originally known as the MAB Education Fund which was started in 1971. Now the scheme has been revised and new features have been added in order to meet the needs not only of blind graduates but also other blind persons interested in improving themselves or in gaining new skills. For the application forms, please contact Godfrey Ooi at tel. 03-2272 2677.

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working
together for
common good**

3. SCHOLARSHIPS

Blind undergraduates seeking scholarships from MAB should submit applications by June 30, 2004. Please contact Godfrey at above given number.

4. AWARDS FOR THE BLIND IN EDUCATION

From this year onwards (2004), MAB will be giving cash awards to the best blind students for the year in the various public examinations. We have contacted the JPK and other relevant institutions for the results.

However, if you know of any deserving case, please submit their names by June 30, 2004 for our consideration.

5. PARLIAMENTARY BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS 2004 FOR THE DISABLED

During the parliamentary budget session in September 2003, the outgoing Prime Minister, Dato' Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, announced some benefits for the disabled which included the following highlights:

(a) The Elaun Pekerja Cacat (EPC) or the Workers' Incentive Allowance of RM200 per month is now available to those earning less than RM700. Previously, it was less than RM500 for those in the Klang Valley and RM400 for those outside the Klang Valley.

(b) 20% discount on the purchase of low and medium cost houses can be obtained through the Syarikat Prasarana Negara Bhd. (SPNB).

(c) Credit will be made available for MAB Shoppe Franchising by the Malaysian Association for the Blind.

(d) An allowance of RM300 per month will now be available to students of all disabilities pursuing education in institutes of higher learning. Previously, this was given only to hearing impaired students who were attending poly-technical institutes.

(e) An allowance of RM25 per month will now be provided for disabled school students.

(f) Free white canes and Perkins Braille will be provided to the blind.

(g) A Special Department for

the Disabled will be established in the Ministry of Human Resources in order to monitor policies on disabled employment such as the 1% policy in the public and private sectors.

(h) The ICT Rentis Training and Research Institute will be established in Sungei Buluh whereby the government will collaborate with a corporate agency to bring ICT benefits to the deaf and blind. This will include carrying out studies on the Global Positioning System (GPS) and other modern technologies for the disabled.

(i) Free road tax will be available to the disabled for locally manufactured caravans and other vehicles owned by disabled persons.

6. MAB PLACEMENT BROCHURE

This brochure was launched by the Hon'ble Minister of Human Resources, Dato' Seri Fong Chan Onn, on October 17, 2003 at the Kompleks MAB. For print copies, please contact En. Zainuddin Jasmi and for braille copies please contact En. Godfrey Ooi at tel. 2272 2677 ext. 19 and ext. 27 respectively.

7. THE NICOLITE

St. Nicholas has started publishing its newsletter in a new format known as The Nicolite since 2003. At the back of the letter is a library membership form for blind persons to fill in at their convenience and return to Nicholas Lam who can be contacted at tel. 013-4410331.

8. VACANCIES AT ST. NICHOLAS

St. Nicholas Home is advertising for the recruitment of the following staff—

(a) Computer Braillist

The minimum qualification required is SPM with credits in English and Bahasa Malaysia, proficiency in the Malay language, and computer competency; knowledge of Jawi braille would be an added advantage.

(b) Female Massage Instructor

This is a new post and applications from trained masseurs are welcome.

SUPPORT OUR CAUSE

The National Council for the Blind, Malaysia (NCBM) provides a vital link between the organisations serving the blind in this country by acting as the national coordinating body. Through NCBM, the organisations for and of the blind have a channel to discuss and formulate national policies and plans and to pioneer new programmes for the benefit of the blind.

Your financial support will, therefore, go a long way in helping to bring about new developments and progress for the blind. All contributions are deeply appreciated.

Donations should be made in the name of the National Council for the Blind, Malaysia.

Address:
94-B Jalan Tun Sambanthan
Brickfields
50470 KUALA LUMPUR.
Tel : 03-2273 5508/
: 03-2272 4959
Fax : 03-2272 4960

OUR STRUGGLE TO ACHIEVE A DREAM

Part II
by Mrs. Janet Ng

Editor's Note: The first part of this article appeared in "The NCBM Outreach" of April - June 2004. Mrs. Janet Ng continues with the story of a mother and son to achieve what had seemed so impossible to them.

For the first time, Colin would be sitting in classes, trying to follow the lectures like the sighted students. The college had no facilities to accommodate a visually impaired student. During the months that followed, the lecturers, college mates, Colin and I had to find ways to work together and assist each other so that Colin could understand the lectures. There were both gratifying and frustrating moments that kept us all on our feet. The one that felt the pressure most was Colin himself. He was doing something he liked so very much and yet he was unable to comprehend some of the

things that demanded the use of sight. At times he did not know how to ask for help for he did not understand what he was required to do or what the instructions meant.

The lecturers had to make changes in their ways of teaching so that Colin could follow the lessons. Lecture notes had to be made available to Colin who depended on braille. He could not see illustrations and explanations that were made on the board. The college mates became aware of the setbacks encountered by a visually impaired friend. They had to find ways to help him cope. As they sat in for the same lectures with him, they were in the best position to assist Colin when he was at a loss.

The college examination board had to look for ways to assess a student who needed braille. They had to find ways to maintain confidentiality in their exam questions and yet allow Colin to take the same exam like other college mates. Colin would have to maintain the standard that was set for all other students of the music faculty.

I had to be sure that the

reference materials Colin required were written in braille. They had to be compiled in time for Colin to use during his lectures. The handouts that were given during lectures had to be transcribed into braille quickly. Colin had to read them through before he attended the subsequent classes so that he could keep up. Essential diagrams had to be embossed so that Colin could have an idea of what had been explained in the lectures. When Colin encountered problems during lectures, he found it difficult to tell me. He did not know what was happening so he had no way of explaining to me what those problems were. When such problems surfaced, I asked for permission to sit in with him during lectures and helped him sort them out.

College life was a big change from the routine Colin once had when he was in school. The latter had a standard schedule that everyone adhered to. Required study materials were available in braille for Colin to refer to them. Teachers in school had the tools, although they were not complete at times, to help visually disabled

students understand their lessons. In college, there were sufficient facilities for the students but Colin could not refer to many of them, as they were not designed for blind students. He depended on his ears, friends, lecturers, a cassette recorder and me. This method of learning is one that is not conducive for any person, be it a child, a grown man, an able-bodied person or for one with special needs.

There was no assurance that those he depended on would be able to give him what he wanted.

“Do my friends have the time to help me?”; “When can they come to help?”; “Do they know what I want?”; “The lecturer spoke a bit too fast, what was it he said just now?”; “What is the lecturer writing on the board?”; “Will my mother be able to get my lecture notes out today?”; “Will my mother be able to get me the books I want to use?”

More and more mind-boggling questions! On reflection, this is not the best way to study. In fact, this is highly frustrating!

Late teenage life is one of venturing into the new world of young adulthood. Like

others, Colin was growing into a young adult. College mates were getting their car license. They were moving around independently, socialising. Students went to college with friends, moving in groups, driving, talking, laughing, and they hung-out together after lectures. Colin needed mother to take him to college and back. He had to wait for his books and notes to be transcribed into braille by mother. When he encountered problems during lectures, mother had to help out. It was mother, mother and mother all the time. Although my assistance was more of a need than a want, it was tormenting to a young man who was trying to develop a sense of self-identity.

Colin needed friends who would share some time with him, talk to him, and allow him to share his thoughts with them. He wanted to be as much a part of his college peers as possible. However, this was difficult. He could not go to his friends freely and had to wait for them to go to him instead. Making appointments to spend a little time with someone was a precious gift for Colin. He cherished these occasions and would happily tell me

about them at the end of the day. On the contrary, after waiting for a friend and the person did not turn up or notify him of any last minute changes, so leaving Colin bored and lonely, he would be so disappointed that he would lock himself in his room the moment he returned home.

Visually impaired people, and the community of the disabled in general, often experienced what Colin felt. Disabled people have feelings just like others. It hurts them deeply when they are overlooked by the people around them. They try as best as they can to cope with the pressures that they encounter. However, like everyone (and even machines for that matter) they have a threshold limit.

If they sense that the environment is hostile towards them, they would quickly react to protect themselves to avoid being hurt mentally and emotionally. This is because they already have an imposing disability to deal with. They can do without other unnecessary problems. If the surrounding that they are in were conducive, they would readily share their thoughts. When they have the assurance to open up to one person, that person will experience an

interesting healthy interaction and in turn be encouraged with the friendship formed.

As Colin has now completed the 32-month programme of a Diploma in Music, he did not only receive a structured education in Contemporary Music but he had a better understanding of the disadvantages of being visually impaired. He became more aware of his limitations. He realised how this disability affected him mentally and emotionally as he studied in a society of able-bodied people.

From here on I pray Colin will be more prepared to merge into the working community in the near future and develop an identity for himself. Colin will continue to stumble and take a fall or two along the way to reach whatever goal he has in mind and heart. However, these painful ways of growing will one day make him a man!

Thank you to Mr. Teh Keng Hoe for giving Colin his first music education. Without him initiating music guidance to my son, Colin may not have been able to reach this level of achievement. Thank you to Mr. and Mrs. Tan Chee Yong. Their music school, Harmony

Music Centre, from the time Colin had his first music lessons until today, remains as Colin's library for him to explore and do his research in music. Thank you to Madam Tan Tat Chin, Miss Yeoh Sheau Iong and Miss Tang Choong Kae of Selangor Institute of Music for coaching Colin so that he was able to obtain the ABRSM Grade 4 and Grade 5 certificates to start him off with college education in music. Thank you to Mrs. Sara Ramani of Methodist Boys School Kuala Lumpur for coaching Colin in English Literature so that he could develop the skill to write lovely songs. Thank you to Mrs. Chong Lin and Mrs. Rajaletchumi of Sekolah Menengah Pendidikan Khas (Cacat Penglihatan) Setapak for their constant encouragement and support when Colin took time off during school hours to go for English Literature classes.

Thank you to Dr. Richard and Dr. Kiran Veerapen. They were not only medical consultants to Colin and me but they provided emotional support. They helped me to make major medical decisions. Thank you to Dr. Lim Beng Hoon, our family general practitioner. Her love for

Colin brought him back to her every time he needed medical attention. Thank you to my friends in People's Park Baptist Church, Petaling Jaya and Praise Baptist Church, Sri Damansara. Besides the comfort that they gave, they raised the funds to purchase a braille printer so that I could print the required braille materials in time for Colin. Thank you to my friends of Community Baptist Church, Puchong for answering my call of help whenever I felt that I was sinking into deep waters. My thanks go to other unmentioned medical consultants and friends who had rendered invaluable assistance.

Mr. Joseph Choo had left us to be with the Lord. If he could be here today, Mr. Joseph Choo would have been the happiest and proudest man to see that Colin has made his invaluable assistance worthwhile!

My husband had always been a silent supporter, watching in the shadows, making sure that we were comfortable. He was seldom perceived as an active participant in shaping Colin's life. He had remained in the background, sustaining our daily needs and expenditure as

best he could. In what he had done, he had given me the ability to concentrate on bringing up our son.

Without the assistance that was given by all friends mentioned here and earlier on the 2 August 2003, the day of the Convocation Ceremony, Colin may not be here today. I cannot deny that without every contribution from all my friends, as a mother, I could still be struggling to help Colin accomplish his dream.

To everyone both my husband and I would like to say God bless you.

**Treat a person
as he is, and
he will remain
as he is. Treat
him as he
could be, and
he will
become what
he should be.**

(Jimmy)

THE NCBM EMPLOYMENT SEMINAR 2003

*by Maniam Sinnasamy,
Executive Director,
St. Nicholas Home, Penang*

The NCBM Employment Seminar was held in Pulau Langkawi from 22nd to 23rd September 2003. The seminar was ably chaired by Mr. S. Kulasegaran, the Vice President of NCBM.

Speaking at the seminar were Dato' Hj. Ahmad Saleh bin Hj. Sarif, the Timbalan Ketua Setiausaha of the Ministry of National Unity and Social Development; Puan Zaharah bt. Zainal Abidin, Penolong Pengarah Kanan of the Ministry of Human Resources; and Puan Haslena Ismail, Public Relations Manager of the Malaysian Employers' Federation.

Towards achieving the goal of providing new and better services to the blind, the

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seminar called upon the government to conduct a national survey in partnership with NCBM and other concerned non-governmental organisations in order to obtain more accurate statistics on the status and population of disabled persons in the country. This would help to facilitate planning in the provision of services for the disabled in education, vocational training, job placement, and special care programmes. In particular, the seminar highlighted the challenge facing the organisations serving the blind to provide for special needs groups such as the elderly blind, the deaf-blind and the multiple-handicapped.

In view of the progress achieved in the implementation of the Employment Recommendations adopted in 1998, the representatives from the five Member Organisations of NCBM reaffirm their commitment to vigorously pursue the goals as set out

below:

1. FULLY-EFFECTIVE PLACEMENT SERVICE

That the previous recommendation calling on all OSBP to have fully-effective placement service be maintained and strengthened. They appeal to the Sarawak Society for the Blind, which stated that they have no intention of starting such a service, to seriously reconsider their position to start an effective placement service to cater to the needs of present workers and future job seekers.

The following measures are recommended for achieving better quality services for the blind:

1.1 All blind persons seeking vocational training must undergo pre-training assessment and career guidance.

1.2 Blind persons seeking placement service must also undergo pre-placement assessment.

1.3 All OSBP are urged to work together to standardise pre-training and pre-placement assessment package.

1.4 The placement service must work hand-in-hand with the vocational training service in the training and placement of blind persons.

2. TRAINING FACILITIES

The recommendation on training facilities from the previous seminar which states

“..... Although the training being offered by Member Organisations in their centres are playing their responsible roles in preparing blind people for employment, it is recognised that these centres cannot adequately meet the requirements of blind job seekers with higher education, have sufficient number of trainees to justify the introduction of new courses, nor are these facilities expected to be able to keep abreast with the demands of

the changing job market. To address this situation and to encourage blind people to venture into new careers, OSBP should commit themselves to provide strong backup support by way of helping with equipment, financial and other forms of assistance to the blind aspirants to attend courses offered by commercial and other institutions

is even more relevant today. To enhance its implementation, the sharing of resources among OSBP, which may involve secondment of staff, should be increased.

3. WORKSHOPS FOR THE BLIND

Workshops for the blind, which may include production centres, sheltered workshops or cooperatives, will continue to be necessary for some blind persons. Efforts must go on in implementing this recommendation to give these persons a respectable means for earning some income.

4. EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION DATABANK

This recommendation

calling on all OSBP to make it their responsibility to furnish accurate and informative data to the databank should be pursued more vigorously to meet Target 12 of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action which states: “By 2010, reliable data that measure the employment and self-employment rates of persons with disabilities will exist in all countries.”

5. EXCHANGE PROGRAMME

The seminar affirm its commitment on the implementation of the previous recommendation which calls on “NCBM to work out a programme consisting of schemes for attachment training, secondment of personnel to another organisation for special undertakings and

**It's time for
the
blind to
help the
blind**

sending them for refresher courses, even going on overseas study tours, to gain further experience to broaden their perspectives”.

6. CONVENTION FOR EMPLOYEES OF OSBP

NCBM will initiate an annual convention for employees of OSBP to foster better understanding and to promote greater level of exchange of ideas.

7. THE ROLE OF NCBM

NCBM will be a catalyst for change by actively:

7.1 Promoting public awareness and mobilising support for a change in public policy with regard to employment.

7.2 Strengthening capacity building of employment/placement officers and providing development opportunities.

7.3 Promoting a culture of service excellence and ensuring the quality of all employment-related programmes and services.

7.4 NCBM playing an active coordinating role in helping OSBP to fully and effectively access services, facilities and opportunities in training and placement offered by the various government agencies, particularly the Ministry of Human Resources Malaysia, in pursuance of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action.

CONCLUSION

All governing bodies of Member Organisations of NCBM are urged to adopt these recommendations by 31st January 2004.

(This document was prepared in consultation with the following:

- Miss Chok Siew Lee, Executive Secretary, Society of the Blind in Malaysia
- Mr. George Thomas, Executive Director, Malaysian Association for the Blind
- Prof. Dr. Hjh. Norani Mohd. Salleh, Chairperson, NCBM Employment and Placement Service

- Mr. Moses Choo Siew Cheong, Executive Officer, Blind Professional Assistance Service, NCBM
- Mr. Ivan Ho Tuck Choy, Executive Director, NCBM.

**The attempt
to silent a
man is the
greatest
honour you
can bestow on
him. It means
that you
recoqnise his
superiority to
yourself.**

(Joseph Sobran,
Universal Press
Sydicate)

WBUAP SURVEY 2002 - PART VI SERVICES FOR THE BLIND IN COMBODIA, MYANMAR, THAILAND AND VIETNAM

*by Ivan Ho Tuck Choy
and Godfrey Ooi Goat See*

The common factor among these four countries is that they are coastal nations and they are all located on the South-East Asian mainland in immediate and close proximity to one another.

The land areas covered by these countries and their populations are as follows:

- Cambodia: 181,035 square kilometres; Population: 11,500,000 people.
- Myanmar: 417,965 square kilometres (or 261,228 square miles); Population: 48,000,000 people.
- Thailand: 517,000 square kilometres; Population: 63,000,000 people.
- Vietnam: 330,991 square kilometres; Population: 80,000,000 people.

In Cambodia there are

about 202,930 disabled people, including about 30,000 blind people. The main causes of blindness are land mine and chemical accidents, vitamin A deficiency and birth defects.

In Myanmar, there are about 966,000 disabled people, including about 450,000 blind persons. The main causes of blindness are malnutrition, glaucoma, trachoma and cataracts.

In Thailand the blind population constitutes about 0.6% or about 378,000 of the population. The causes of blindness are malnutrition, communicable diseases and the low quality of the basic health system. The highest incidence of blindness occurs among the elderly aged 60 years and above while the lowest incidence occurs among the young below 14 years of age.

Vietnam has about 5,000,000 disabled people, including about 697,000 blind persons. The main causes of blindness are war-related or due to eye diseases, unhygienic conditions and the lack of vitamin A.

Services available to the blind in these countries are as follows:

1. EDUCATION

Cambodia has three primary schools for blind children and a number of integrated or inclusive education programmes. At least 150 blind children are in special schools and another 60 are in integrated education.

In Myanmar there are six special schools for the blind and at least 454 blind persons are benefiting from education.

In Thailand there are four schools for the blind and several integrated programmes. Where they are in close proximity to one another, the special schools provide support services to the integrated programmes. There are also non-formal educational services for the adult blind. Although about 10% or about 37,800 blind persons should have benefited from education, the 2001 survey revealed the following: Only 6515 blind persons have received education while only 431 of these students have managed to graduate from universities or colleges.

Vietnam has 15 special schools for the blind and seven integrated or inclusive education programmes. At least 1,295 blind children are in primary education and another 864 blind students are in integrated programmes.

2. VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

Cambodia has only one main vocational training programme for the blind which emphasises on massage training. Employment opportunities for the blind are very

limited but there are about 30 blind masseurs and seven blind musicians.

In Myanmar there are three vocational training centres and the types of training include agriculture, animal husbandry, canework, bamboowork, fish and eel breeding, doormat and mat weaving, broom making and massage. However, there are no employment statistics regarding the blind except that 16 blind persons are engaged as musicians.

In Thailand the rehabilitation and vocational training centres are run by the non-governmental organisations. It is estimated that only 2-3% or more than ten thousand blind persons should be in employment. However, according to the 2001 survey, only 5144 blind persons are engaged in some kind of employment. About 80% of the employed blind earn less than US\$71.50 per month and the most popular occupation is the sale of government lottery tickets. Other blind persons are engaged as masseurs, fortune tellers, musicians, farmers and telephone operators.

Vietnam has 65 vocational training centres for the blind and the training programmes

include agriculture, handicrafts and massage. The number of blind persons in employment is as follows:

Farmers	40,215
Handicraft workers	4,020
Masseurs	718
Lottery salesmen	10
Total:	44,963

employed blind persons.

3. SHELTERED WORKSHOPS

In Cambodia there are no sheltered workshops for the blind.

Myanmar has seven sheltered workshops for the blind and about 30 blind persons are employed in these workshops.

Thailand has at least one sheltered workshop which focusses on the manufacture of furniture to be used at the higher institutions of learning.

Vietnam has five sheltered workshops which provide employment for at least 290 blind persons.

4. INFORMATION SERVICES

In Cambodia there are

only six braille embossers and no printing houses are in existence.

Myanmar has three braille libraries which also provide talking books on cassette tape. No DAISY books are being produced.

Thailand has at least one braille library but it is unable to meet the needs of the blind for braille textbooks.

In Vietnam there are 65 braille libraries which also provide talking books on cassette tape. No DAISY books are being produced. At least six braille embossers are in operation in some of these libraries and they are used for the production of textbooks, story books and magazines.

5. SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES

In Cambodia the blind do not enjoy any social welfare services nor are they covered by any kind of insurance scheme.

Myanmar only provides the blind with free education.

In Thailand there is the general belief that blind

persons are incapable and this is largely responsible for their lack of opportunities for self-development and the acquisition of skills. As a result, very little help has been received from the government for the benefit of the blind. However, the blind, like other disabled persons, could register with the government job placement services for possible reference to employers. Loans are also made available by the government to help the blind in developing their business enterprises.

In Vietnam the blind enjoy many services free of charge, including public health, education, postage for letters and parcels, office equipment and furniture and even personnel.

6. LEGISLATION

Cambodia and Myanmar do not have any special legislation for the blind.

In Thailand there has been a growing awareness among the blind that they had to do something in order to change their low image and status in society. This ultimately led to the establishment of the blind self-help organisations and

movement through which the blind had been actively advocating for the rehabilitation act and other policies for the upliftment of the blind. Now there is a regulation which prescribes a certain quota of employment for the blind. However, employers who do not wish to fulfil this obligation may contribute to a certain government fund which will be used for the benefit of the disabled, including the blind. Two other funds have also been established by the government to help the blind in education and rehabilitation. The blind are also working towards the establishment of a framework that would enable them to exercise equal human rights.

Vietnam has some policies which favour the blind in education, public health and even for national loans.

7. GENDER ISSUES

In Cambodia the blind women face many more difficulties and hardships than the blind men. Because of this, one of the organisations has started a special scheme for blind women to provide them with opportunities for training

in practical knowledge and skills. It is not surprising, therefore, that the blind women are very poorly represented in the organisations serving the blind.

Concerning marriages, there are now only four blind couples and another six blind men are married to sighted women.

In Myanmar, the blind women do enjoy equal status and opportunities. There are at least 80 blind couples while another 121 blind men are married to sighted women.

Thailand did not touch on any matters pertaining to blind women or gender issues.

As for the blind women of Vietnam, they also enjoy equal status and opportunities with the men. At least 340,000 blind persons are married, including 256 blind couples and another 339,744 marriages among the blind and sighted.

In summary, it would appear that Cambodia has the least resources and the services for the blind are the least developed in this country. It can also be observed that the educational services for the blind in all the

four countries seem to be rather inadequate in meeting the needs of blind persons. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that Thailand is in the process of developing the basis for a comprehensive network of educational programmes to meet the needs of the blind through special and integrated education and even non-formal education for the adult blind.

Concerning human resources, the widest range of vocational training and employment opportunities for the blind appears to be available in Myanmar but the largest labour force among the blind is in Vietnam.

Sheltered workshops appear to be quite well developed in Myanmar and Vietnam. In particular, perhaps something could be learnt from Vietnam which has five of such workshops which provide employment for 290 blind persons.

With regards to the information services, Vietnam also appears to be the leader with its 65 braille libraries. However, it is still lagging behind in the area of technological resources and it needs to make much more

progress in the acquisition of braille embossers to meet the needs of the blind for reading materials.

All the four countries have a long way to go in the development of social welfare services and in the formulation of special policies and legislation for the blind. Thailand, however, appears to be making the greatest headway in this area of work for the blind.

On the question of marriages and social integration, Vietnam again seems to be leading the way.

On the whole, there is much that the four countries can share with one another in terms of experiences and expertise. Certainly, there is still much work to be done not only in Cambodia but in all the other three countries as well in order to bring about development and progress for the blind in this region.

**It's time for
the
blind to
help the
blind**

NEWS FROM THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND, MALAYSIA

*Contributed by Ivan Ho Tuck Choy
and Moses Choo*

ICT COURSE FOR THE BLIND IN JAPAN

The Japan Braille Library and the World Blind Union Asia-Pacific (WBUAP) are collaborating in running a one-month ICT course for blind youths in the Asia-Pacific region. The first course was held at the Japan Braille Library in Tokyo, Japan from August 21 to September 19, 2004.

The main sponsor of the course is the Teruko Ikeda Foundation. Five scholarships were offered for the first course which included airfares, local transport costs in Japan, accommodation and a daily meal allowance of 3,000 yen. At the end of the course, the scholarship holders received equipment such as notebook computers, screen reader software, JAWS (English version), and braille displays.

During the course, the students learned basic

computer skills such as word processing, how to use the e-mail, accessing the internet, formatting and layout for printing and embossing, how to operate the braille display and the welfare policy and system for the disabled in Japan. They also visited some organisations serving the blind in Japan in order to learn about their work.

Those who are interested in joining the future courses must fulfil the following conditions and requirements:

They must be blind and be between 18 to 30 years old;

They must be active in organisations serving the blind or other disabilities;

They must have a good command of English and be braille literate, i.e. they can read and write English braille;

They must indicate whether they have typing or computer keypad skills.

Applications must be sent in braille or inkprint to

En. Ivan Ho,
Secretary-general,
WBUAP,
c/o NCBM,
94-B Jalan Tun
Sambanthan, Brickfields,
50470 Kuala Lumpur.

**IF YOU KNOW
OF ANY BLIND
PERSON NEEDING
REGISTRATION FOR
EDUCATION OR
REHABILITATION,
PLEASE CONTACT
US IMMEDIATELY**

**NCBM
Tel: 03-2272 4959
03-2272 1442**

**MAB
Tel: 03-2272 2676**

NEWS FROM THE MALAYSIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE BLIND

THE MAB JOB PLACEMENT SERVICE

According to En. Zainuddin Jasmi, the MAB Placement Officer, blind persons who found employment in 2003 are as follows:

Telephone Operators	7
Masseurs	19
Telemarketeers	13
Student Affairs Officer	1
Legal Executive	1
Total	41

For the months of January to March 2004, those who found employment were:

Teachers (Diploma and Graduate level)	11
Telephone Operators	3
Masseurs	3
Telemarketeers	5
Total	22

GTC ENROLMENT

For the first semester intake of 2004 which

commenced on January 5, there were 41 trainees who enrolled with the GTC, out of which 18 were new trainees.

The GTC is now receiving an increasing number of trainees with additional disabilities and they are not suitable for vocational training, according to the Principal, En. Wong Yoon Loong. Also, the number of blind lady trainees has been declining. In order to deal with these challenges, the GTC will be changing its method of processing future intakes of trainees. Instead of basing on the application forms and attached documents for the admission of trainees, a new system of interviewing applicants will be introduced. GTC staff will visit the various State Social Welfare Departments once a year to conduct such interviews.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

En. Wong Yoon Loong

participated in the Group Training Course on Support for Persons with Visual Impairment in Therapeutic Massage Asia-Pacific from January 13 to February 21, 2004. The course was sponsored by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

Ms. Haemalatha Narayanan, the GTC Computer Instructor, took part in the Group Training Course on Technical Aids for Persons with Visual Impairment from January 13 to March 14, 2004. The course was also organised by JICA.

Later, MAB also sent En. Mat Rodzi, GTC Massage Instructor, to take part in the WBUAP Massage Seminar in Hong Kong from May 2 - 7, 2004.

NEW MESSAGE INSTRUCTOR

In view of the increasing interest for the massage

course, MAB has engaged En. Vasu Manickam as the new Massage/Reflexology Instructor for the GTC with effect from March 1, 2004.

MAB BRAILLE CARNIVAL

The MAB Library and Resource Centre organised the MAB Braille Carnival over two Saturdays on March 27 for the braille and Wordprocessing competitions and on April 3 for the reading competitions.

For the English braille contest, the first-prize winner was Dorothy Wong followed by Chan Sau Yin and Violet Kok as runners-up.

In the Bahasa Malaysia braille contest, the first-prize winner was Abu Hassan with Jamilah Abu Bakar and Abdul Rahman Siva in second and third places.

The winner for the English Wordprocessing contest was Wong Kwee Heong with Norazizah Moktar for the second prize and Moktar Soon for the third prize.

For the Bahasa Malaysia Wordprocessing contest, the winner was again Wong Kwee

Heong with Tai Siow Hui and Abian Jambot as runners-up.

The winner for the English reading competition was Chan Sau Yin followed by Timothy Mok and Dorothy Wong in second and third places.

Finally, the Bahasa Malaysia braille reading competition was won by Abian Jambot followed by Jamilah Abu Bakar and Abdul Rahman Siva as the runners-up.

There were six competitions altogether and the winners walked away with cash prizes of RM200, RM150 and RM100 respectively.

Thanks are due to Cik Christine Ng Lai and her team of staff and volunteers.

MAB WELFARE UNIT

For the year of 2003, at least 70 new blind cases were located and identified. Most of the cases were from the Klang Valley while nine of them were from other states.

Tan Wan Chiee was one of the lucky ones to come to our attention after we received a telephone call from a blind

door-to-door salesman. Tan hails from Banting and when she was discovered, she was only 21 years of age and had been studying at Inti College. She became blind after a motorcycle accident. Now she is an enthusiastic trainee at the Gurney Training Centre.

Another of our clients, Datuk Howard Biles, passed away last year at the HUKM, Cheras at the age of 85. He had been living in Kelantan for some time as an ex-patriate after retiring from the Department of Aborigines where he had served for many years. He visited the MAB about four years ago and registered as a member of the MAB library.

One more of our clients is Bernadette Mary Tan Jin Ean but our Outreach readers know her as Firefly Bernie. Unfortunately, she is suffering from cancer and may have only about three months to live after her recent breast cancer operation in April. However, she is bearing it up with great courage and determination and she tells us that one consolation for her when she dies is that she will see her dog, Junior, once again in heaven.

She is also proud to have



Mr. Moses Choo explaining the functions of the CCTV to Puan Hajjah Siti Zaharah Bte. Mat Akib during the exhibition in conjunction with the National Special Education Week 2004.

achieved one of her long-time dreams with the publication of her autobiography entitled “Firefly: You Can’t Go Home Again”. This book is now available on talking book at the MAB library and will be produced in braille soon. She has yet another book of poems ready for printing but she is unable to find a sponsor to help her publish the book.

Bernadette Tan became partially blind in the 1990s when the car she was driving collided with another motorcar. This accident also left her partially deaf and with a crippled leg. She was formerly a Creative Arts Director at the Lim Kok Weng

Institute.

MAB TALENTIME

The MAB Recreation Club (formerly known as the Social Activity Centre) was set up last year in 2003 and it held its first talentime contest for the blind on April 24, 2004. There were 14 contestants and they were accompanied by a band of very talented blind musicians who called themselves “The Reunified” although the Master of Ceremonies preferred to call them “The New Bang”.

Anuar Ngatnan was the champion of the contest while

the runners-up were Shamsuri Hitam and Jamaludin Rashid. They received cash prizes of RM300, RM200 and RM100. They also received an additional bonus of RM100 each from Dato’ L. Krishnan, the Chairman of the MAB Sports and Recreation Committee, who officiated at the closing ceremony.

**The attempt
to silent a
man is the
greatest
honour you
can bestow on
him. It means
that you
recoqnise his
superiority to
yourself.**

(Joseph Sobran,
Universal Press
Sydicate)



Winner of the primary level National Braille Reading Competition 2004, Anis Nabilah Wahab from Penang.



Winner of the lower secondary level National Braille Reading Competition 2004, Alfa Nuraini Erman Efendi from Penang.



Winner of the upper secondary level National Braille Reading Competition 2004, Siti Nurjannah Zamzuri from Kuala Lumpur.

THE MAB GOLDEN JUBILEE EDUCATION FUND

by Christine Ng Lai

1. BACKGROUND

The MAB Golden Jubilee Education Fund was launched by Datuk Prof. Dr. Ismail bin Md. Salleh, President of the Malaysian Association for the Blind, on November 9, 2001 in commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of MAB. During the dinner function, financial contributions were received from or pledged by distinguished members of the public in favour of the fund amounting to about RM200,000.

The MAB Scholarship Fund (its original name) was

started in 1971 with a sum of only RM10,000. Through this fund, financial assistance was to be given to blind students in higher education in the form of a study loan. Two students have benefited from this Fund and they are Martha Ho (in 1971) and Chow Sak Chin (in 2001).

In 1988 the Institute of Engineers, Malaysia (IEM) kindly agreed to provide a fixed annual grant (which is currently RM4,000 per year) through the Tun Hussein Onn Memorial Scholarship Scheme which was also initiated in the same year. The aim of this Scheme was also to assist blind students in tertiary education. Such beneficiaries were not required to return the money on completion of their studies. Three students have benefited from this Scheme and they are Shafiee bin Mohd. Isa (1988), Wong Huey Siew (1991), and Joseph bin Mongijal (1996).

In addition, small grants of varying amounts (usually around RM1,000) were made available to blind students in tertiary education. This was to support them in college education, to sponsor their efforts in carrying out research or study projects at the university, or to assist them in obtaining adapted equipment or even ordinary aids such as tape-recorders to help them in their studies.

With the establishment of the MAB Golden Jubilee Education Fund, MAB would like to continue in the same spirit of encouraging and supporting the blind in the pursuit of academic achievements. At the same time, it would also like to introduce new ideas in order to make the fund more dynamic and responsive in meeting the needs of a greater number of blind persons in the pursuit of education and training.

It's time for
the
blind to
help the
blind

2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the fund are as follows:

2.1 To provide financial assistance to needy and deserving blind Malaysian students wishing to pursue further education in an accredited institution of higher learning.

2.2 To foster the spirit of pioneering into new fields of learning and career development among the blind.

2.3 To encourage blind students to pursue courses in the disability and blindness field so that they will be able to make effective contributions in

the development and management of services for the blind.

2.4 To support the effort of blind students and other interested blind persons in carrying out research activities.

2.5 To enable the blind to participate in capacity-building and skill-enhancing programmes.

3. KINDS OF EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE

Educational assistance will be made available to blind students wishing to pursue higher education in universities as well as private colleges and institutions at the tertiary level by providing scholarships or educational loans which may also be converted to free scholarships based on the performance of blind graduates.

The two main categories of educational assistance are as follows:

3.1 The Tun Hussein Onn Scholarship Scheme

This scholarship is open to needy blind students

wishing to pursue higher education. The amount to be made available will be RM6,000 per year. This scheme is being preserved under the name of the late YAB Tun Hussein Onn who was President of MAB from 1974 to 1990.

Note: Philanthropists are cordially invited to be sponsors of this scheme. Currently, IEM is the only sponsor.

3.2 Educational Loans

Loans will be made available to outstanding blind students (including those pursuing studies in pioneering and disability fields). However, such loans may be converted to free or subsidised scholarships on the application of the graduating student based on the following guidelines:

- First-class Honours: full sponsorship
- Second-class Honours and below: 50% sponsorship
- Failure in graduating examination or to complete studies: loan must be returned in full to MAB.

The amount to be made

Some are born
great, some
achieve
greatness and
some hire
public relations
writers.

(Daniel J. Boorstin)

available for each educational loan will be RM6,000 per year. It is hoped that at least five loans can be provided to the blind each year.

4. KINDS OF GRANT ASSISTANCE

Grants can be made available to assist blind students and other interested blind persons in the following:

- Research projects in tertiary education or in various other fields of development that will be of benefit to the blind.
- Capacity-building or skill-

enhancing programmes and activities such as leadership training, management courses, and business enterprise workshops.

The amount to be given for each of these grants will be either up to a maximum of RM1,000 or the price required for the project or activity, whichever is lower. It is hoped that at least five grants can be provided each year.

Note: Adaptive equipment will no longer be provided under this scheme but through another scheme which will be supporting ICT development among the blind.

5. EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

Cash awards will be provided to blind students in the following categories:

5.1 Primary and Secondary Education

This award will be given to the best blind student of the year or to those blind students who score the best results. However, to qualify for the awards, the student(s) must have at least one A or an average of B's. This will apply

to all the public examinations.

The amount to be given for each of the following categories will be:

- UPSR examination RM200
- PMR examination RM300
- SPM examination RM400
- STPM examination RM500

5.2 Tertiary Education

This award will be given to the best blind graduate of the year or to those blind graduates who score the best results in accordance with the CGP system. However, to qualify for the awards, the graduates must have at least a score of 3.0 or an average of B's.

The amount to be given for the following categories will be:

- Diploma level RM1,000
- University graduate level RM2,000

Note: More than one winner can qualify for the award if they attain the same level of achievement. In the event that there is more than one winner in each category, all the winners will be given the full amount of money as provided for in the scheme rather than splitting up the award between or among the winners.

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**MAB
Tel: 03-2272 2676**

APPLICATION FORM FOR EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE
FROM MAB GOLDEN JUBILEE EDUCATION FUND

PART I. PERSONAL PARTICULARS

Please supply personal details where relevant as follows:

NAME (in block letters) _____

DATE AND PLACE OF BIRTH _____

IDENTITY CARD NUMBER _____

CAUSE OF BLINDNESS AND
DEGREE OF VISION _____

GENDER _____

HOUSE ADDRESS AND TEL. NO. _____

POSTAL ADDRESS AND TEL. NO. _____

NAMES, ADDRESS AND TEL. NO.
OF PARENTS/GUARDIAN _____

INCOME OF PARENTS/GUARDIAN _____

NAMES, ADDRESSES AND
TEL. NO. OF TWO REFEREES _____

LAST SCHOOL OF ATTENDANCE _____

POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY
HELD IN SCHOOL FOR THE
LAST TWO YEARS _____

POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY
HELD OUTSIDE SCHOOL _____

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES
IN SCHOOL _____

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT OR
PREVIOUS OCCUPATION AND
MONTHLY INCOME? _____

MARITAL STATUS _____

HOW MANY DEPENDENTS _____

(give names and status
in relation to you) _____

NATURE OF PRESENT _____

ACCOMMODATION (home,
foster family, university
hostel, etc.) _____

PART II. EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE

This section is for those who are interested in pursuing further education.

Please supply details pertaining to educational assistance.

TYPE OF SCHOLARSHIP
ASSISTANCE REQUESTED

TUN HUSSEIN ONN SCHOLARSHIP/
MAB EDUCATIONAL LOAN

AMOUNT OF MONEY
REQUESTED PER YEAR _____

NAME OF UNIVERSITY OR
INSTITUTE ADMITTED TO _____

DURATION OF COURSE _____

TYPE OF COURSE AND
DEGREE/DIPLOMA PURSUED _____

DOES YOUR COURSE EQUIP YOU
WITH ANY KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS
IN THE BLINDNESS FIELD
(state relevant courses) _____

DO YOU INTEND TO WORK WITH
AN ORGANISATION OR IN ANY
PROGRAMME THAT WILL BENEFIT
THE BLIND AFTER GRADUATION
(name organisation or programme
and attach letter if available) _____

IF YOU ARE/HAVE BEEN IN
RECEIPT OF ANY SCHOLARSHIP/
AWARD, GIVE NAME AND
DATE OF AWARD _____

ARE YOU SEEKING ADDITIONAL _____
ASSISTANCE FROM ANY OTHER _____
SOURCES?

ANY OTHER REMARKS _____

SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT _____

SIGNATURE OF REFEREES _____

SIGNATURE OF RELEVANT
OFFICERS SUPPORTING
YOUR APPLICATION _____

DATE OF SUBMITTING
APPLICATION FORM _____

NEWS FROM ST. NICHOLAS HOME

contributed by Nicholas Lam

FAMILY CAMP FOR THE DEAF-BLIND

Our deaf-blind students and their families took part in a family camp from December 4 - 7, 2003. The Chairman of the Organising Committee was En. Ibrahim, the father of one of the deaf-blind children.

The guest of honour at the opening ceremony was Datuk Rajapathi, a state EXCO member for welfare services.

Activities were organised whereby parents could express themselves and they could have a time of sharing and support for each other, a time to learn how to take care of a deaf-blind child at home, and how to start a support network. There were also fun activities, a picnic and games at the youth park as well as interactive activities between parents, children and staff.

The food was sponsored by Angsana Enterprise and the parents were provided free accommodation. The parents

were so positive and overwhelmingly appreciative that they decided to hold another reunion camp on February 21, 2004. A post mortem of the three-day camp was discussed and it was unanimously agreed that a similar camp be held at the end of this year in December.

Interested persons can show their support for the programme through personal involvement or financial sponsorship of a deaf-blind child.

ST. NICHOLAS TRAINING CENTRE

In the new strategic plan of St. Nicholas, all training programmes have been unified under one unit called St. Nicholas Training Centre. The courses include computer training, massage, and a broad-based rehabilitation programme.

Computer training is under the charge of Silatul

Rahim and the trainees come in batches of eight persons per batch. Over a duration of six weeks, they learn basic computer skills, JAWS, Windows 98 and Microsoft Word.

A new batch of seven trainees were taken in for the massage course which lasts about a year. Under the charge of Ku Yusof, they learn the techniques of body and foot massage, the theory of massage, anatomy, physiology and hygiene. They also have gym and swimming exercises once a week.

Ms. Jaya is the overall officer-in-charge of the Training Centre. There are 14 trainees for the new term of six months. There is also an officer, Wan Ibrahim, in charge of employment.

COMMUNITY-BASED REHABILITATION

The CBR programme has been reorganised and gone

back to the basics - fieldworkers have to go to the rural areas to identify clients and provide the necessary training and support instead of taking them out of their community and putting them into sheltered workshops. At the same time, negotiations are being pursued with the State Welfare to set up partnership one-stop centres where the blind can meet to do business, hold meetings or have fellowship.

TRAINER'S CORNER: PROVIDING STUDENTS WITH THE BEST POSSIBLE TRAINING

by Silatul Rahim Dahman

Many people think that to teach access technology, all they need is to be able to install and use the software and read a hot-key guide. They also enter the field of access technology training for a number of reasons. Some may want to teach blind students to use screen-readers, others may need to change professions, and still others may be required to teach access technology by their employers. Although all these individuals may have a potential for training, too often, they find that they have bitten off more than they can chew.

Being a user of a screen-reader over a period of years, or a sighted computer user with an understanding of mouse navigation and how Windows works with a mouse, may give you knowledge of how computer applications work in everyday

tasks. However, it does not mean that you have a well-rounded knowledge of every aspect of screen reading and how screen readers interface with the programmes that others want to learn. It also does not mean that you have the skills necessary to prepare a lesson plan and the ability to communicate those skills effectively to students who want to learn the ins and outs of computing. For example, to train students to use a screen reader effectively, it is imperative that an instructor be able to do the following:

1. Understand the "language" of the screen reader - the term it uses to convey visual icons and controls to the user.
2. Understand how the application is accessed with a screen reader.
3. Know the common errors that can be made.

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4. Be able to explain the variety of ways in which skills can be attained.

5. Provide an overall understanding of the operating system, application, and screen reader.

On many college campuses, a blind student who enters a technology lab intending to take a computer training course for access technology is met by a fellow student or volunteer clutching a keyboard guide for the screen reader and a true desire to help the blind student learn to use computers. However, the instructor has no knowledge of the special configurations necessary for Windows and screen-reading applications to interface properly or of the terminology used by screen readers and little understanding of blindness in general. He or she will provide only the most rudimentary training in the use of computers. In the end, the blind student will be ill prepared to perform any but

the most basic tasks on a computer. The worst part of this scenario is that the student won't know how ill prepared he is to meet the world beyond college.

Blind students who are new to computing have no idea of the power that lies at their fingertips. Through the training they receive at most college campuses, they can open Microsoft Word, type a document, and print it; they can read the text within the document and perhaps access e-mail. But there is so much more to accessing the world of computers with screen readers, and every blind computer user has a fundamental right to high quality training by a skilled professional. Those who teach only keystrokes and basic information may think they are providing a valuable service to their students, but in reality, they are doing a grave disservice to blind people as a whole. They are providing an "out" for colleges that do not have to hire qualified trainers. They are also denying blind students the high quality training they deserve.

There is also a dearth of qualified instructors in the private sector. Many

rehabilitation counsellors send their clients to independent service providers who are on lists of "qualified" trainers for state departments of rehabilitation. Many of those on this list have the potential to provide high quality training, but they make the mistake of trying to fulfil roles that are beyond their abilities.

One may well be skilled in the use of Microsoft Word, WindowEyes, and various aspects of Hal or JAWS for Windows, but have no knowledge of Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint, hardware issues, or a variety of other aspects of computing. Some trainers are eager to please and think they will not be called on again if they are not able to fulfil every request of rehabilitation counsellors.

Rather than providing training in the areas they know, working to improve their skills and becoming proficient at one task before moving on to another, they answer every call with a can-do attitude. As a result, a number of trainers work from hot-key guides for the Braille N Speak or JAWS for Windows. Rather than provide skilful training in specific applications, they scramble for information, and students receive a one-

**We believe in
working
together for
common good**

dimensional view of their computers or note-takers as they are forced to learn a series of keystrokes. Although many trainers fear that rehabilitation counsellors will turn to others for training, most counsellors would like to know that an instructor doesn't feel prepared to teach a particular skill but specialises in other aspects of computing. Just as other professionals specialise in various aspects of their chosen vocations, it is acceptable for access technology trainers to do so.

TIPS FOR THE TRAINER

Rather Than shoot for a top position and teach in a patchwork style, it may be best to start at the beginning, learning a few programmes well and teaching them to the best of your ability. A reputation for high quality training will carry you far, but you must take small steps to reach this ultimate objective. Each student who leaves your class feeling stronger and more capable in accessing computers is another stepping stone to a reputation as a qualified access technology trainer.

If you know only one

screen reader and one application, learn it well. Figure out every nook and cranny of the application, the configurations necessary for it to work at peak efficiency, the hot keys, and the special screen reading commands for the application. Understand when you are using hot keys for the application and when you are using hot keys for the screen reader. Take the time to learn the fundamentals as well as the advanced features. Know the programme inside and out, including potential problems that may be encountered. Then offer yourself as an instructor in that one programme.

As you teach students to use this one programme, you'll find that you are acquiring skills in communication and presentation. You will even find out more about the application than you originally thought because students may pose questions that may require you to do homework. Never be afraid to say "I don't know, but I may be able to find out". Take advantage of the wealth of resources on the Internet and mailing lists to find the answers to questions and then return to class a bit more knowledgeable and able to give the students the answers to questions they posed in the

previous session.

Take some time each day to improve your knowledge of the programmes you are teaching and to learn new programmes, new skills and new hardware. As you become proficient in their use, add them to your resume. Never offer less than your best and always strive to be better. You may be your students' only opportunity to learn the skills needed to succeed in life beyond your classroom. Make the training experience one that will be remembered and appreciated as the students strive to achieve their goals and fulfill their potential.

**Some are born
great, some
achieve
greatness and
some hire
public relations
writers.**

(Daniel J. Boorstin)

MY HANDBAG NEARLY GONE

by Lily Lam

Editor's Note: This article has been taken from "MAB Focus", issue no. 1, January - April 2003. Mrs. Lily Lam is a volunteer at the MAB Library and Resource Centre and she was among the ten to receive the MAB Service Award during the MAB 50th anniversary celebrations in 2001. She has been a volunteer with MAB since the 1960's, i.e. for a period of about 40 years.

In this story, Mrs. Lam relates her experience of being robbed by a snatch-thief. However, her faith in God enabled her to forgive the robber and gave her the strength to continue serving the blind at MAB.

Here is her story:

On 20th February 2003, I got up in the morning and did my daily devotion. My heart was filled with joy and gratitude to God. I was joyful because it was Thursday again, and time for me to go to MAB to help and fellowship

with my blind friends. I was thankful to God for blessing me with good health so that at age 72, I could still do reading, braille and computer typing for the blind.

As usual when it was lunch time, Christine and I walked out to the nearby coffee shops for lunch. We were chatting and laughing away. As we were approaching the shops opposite YMCA, I suddenly felt a tug at my handbag. Instinctively, I pulled it back. I tried to move away from the snatch thief. Just then, a heavy blow landed on the left side of my face.

"Celaka!" I screamed at him.

"What happened?" a male voice asked.

Turning around, I saw a car with three men in it. The youngest of them immediately ran after the attacker.

"He wanted to snatch my handbag," I explained.

Upon hearing that, the second man from the car also gave chase. The driver of the car then told us that they were plain-clothes policemen.

Halfway through our lunch in a nearby coffee shop, the second policeman came to inform me that he had caught a man so I had to identify if he was the attacker.

After the identification, I was asked to lodge a police report against him. At first, I was reluctant to do so because I had lost nothing; furthermore, I did not want any hassle as I was about to embark on a holiday trip to

It's time for
the
blind to
help the
blind

Hong Kong.

Christine told me that recently, many blind people had been victimised by snatch thieves in Brickfields but the latter were never caught because the blind could not produce witnesses. However, in my case, there were three witnesses and the culprit was already arrested.

I then agreed to lodge a police report, hoping that after this incident, Brickfields would be patrolled by the police more frequently to make it a safer place for all.

Back at MAB library, Christine asked me if my face was still hurting. I told her that I was very upset to have been slapped by the attacker. Christine prayed with me. After that, by God's grace, I was able to forgive him.

We believe in
working
together for
common good

REPORT ON THE FIRST ASIA-PACIFIC DECADE FORUM 2003

by Godfrey Ooi Goat See

The meeting of the First Asia-Pacific Decade Forum (APDF) was held at the YWCA in Singapore from November 26 - 28, 2003. About 300 participants from 17 countries were in attendance.

The three main components of the APDF meeting were:

1. The APDF Working Meeting
2. The APDF Conference
3. Field Visits.

1. THE APDF WORKING MEETING

The APDF Decade has been scheduled for the period from 2003 - 2012. It is actually a follow-up to the First Asia-Pacific Decade Campaign

from 1993 - 2002 organised by the Regional Network of Non-Governmental Organisations (RNN). During the first decade, annual campaigns were held in different countries of the region to share ideas and experiences and to formulate policies on disability work for consideration and implementation in the respective countries.

The purpose of the Second Asia-Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons is to extend the campaign into the countries of this region which did not have the opportunity to organise the programme during the First Asia-Pacific Decade (1993 - 2002). More significantly, however, the other purpose of the Second Decade is to challenge the disabled to take on the leading role in organising the annual programme and spearheading the development of

disability work in the Asia-Pacific region.

Thus, the following decisions were taken.

1.1 ASIA-PACIFIC DISABILITY FORUM AND CONSTITUTION

It was decided that instead of continuing with the Asia-Pacific Decade campaigns, it would be better to establish the Asia-Pacific Disability Forum (APDF) as an international body with a constitution. The advantages are:

(a) It would help to bring about the development of a voice of the disabled in the Asia-Pacific region.

(b) It would be easier to solicit funds from international sources to support development work for the benefit of the disabled, especially in the poorer countries of the Asia-Pacific region.

(c) More effective collaboration could be promoted between and among countries in the Asia-Pacific region concerning the development of disability work. (Please see constitution attached)

1.2 APDF MEMBERSHIP

It was agreed that:

(a) All the members of RNN will be considered as members of APDF but they must confirm by applying and submitting the Application Form. (please see form attached)

(b) Organisations for and of the disabled are eligible to apply for membership. (This means that representatives from both kinds of organisations can be elected to the Executive Committee of APDF.)

(c) New members can be accepted in between the general assemblies but the approval of the new members must be confirmed at the meeting of the assembly.

(d) Membership Fee

This will be US\$50 per annum.

1.3 Elections to the Executive Committee

With the approval of the constitution by a show of hands, it was agreed to hold the elections to the Executive Committee. Those elected

were as follows:

- Judy Wee from Singapore: President
- J. B. Munro from New Zealand: Vice President
- Frank Hall-Bentick from Australia: Treasurer
- Matsui from Japan: Secretary-general
- Monthian from Thailand: U.N. representative (to focus on the Disability Convention)
- Topong from Thailand and Heong Ship King from South Korea: Research and Development (jointly)
- Joseph Kok from Hong Kong: Information and Communications

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public relations
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(Daniel J. Boorstin)

- Sutrapon from Thailand: Gender issues (mainstreaming, networking and empowering disabled women)

- Godfrey Ooi from Malaysia: Fund-raising (mainly for projects to be funded from international sources and through joint activities of member organisations).

1.4 SECRETARIAT

The JSRPD in Japan will serve as the Secretariat.

1.5 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The meetings will be held quarterly via the internet unless the convening of a meeting is really necessary.

1.6 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

This will be held once every two years.

1.7 PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN DISABLED AND NON-DISABLED PERSONS

It was emphasised that

while the disabled are being challenged to take on leadership roles in APDF, they would want the able-bodied to work in partnership with them in the development of disability work in the Asia-Pacific region.

In view of this, both organisations of and for the disabled are welcome to become members of APDF.

2. THE APDF CONFERENCE

2.1 THEME

The theme of the conference was “Disability in the New Millennium”.

2.2 PLENARY SESSIONS

The main topics during the plenary sessions included “The Biwako Millennium Framework for Action” and “Disability in the New Millennium”.

The main speakers included J. B. Munro from Inclusion International (New Zealand), Graham McKinstry from the Asia-Pacific Centre on Disability (New Zealand), Shoji Nakanishi from Disabled People’s International (Japan),

and Sherena Loh from the Handicapped Welfare Association (Singapore).

The main points raised in the presentations included the following:

- We must take cognisance of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action (BMFA), the main objective of which is to create an inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based society in the new millennium.

- Palatial buildings are still being erected with too many steps, necessitating flattening of the steps at high cost ultimately to accommodate the needs of the disabled for access. E.g. developers are rushing to Iraq to put up buildings without accessible designs.

**It’s time for
the
blind to
help the
blind**

- The disabled are still being deprived of education. E.g. a child did not go to school even though he and his parents lived just a couple of kilometres away from the school. Some students informed the principal but nothing could be done because there were no roads and paths that were accessible to the child's wheelchair. One day the principal realised that the school football team was not fit enough and so he made one group to fetch the child in the morning and the other group in the evening.

- The intellectually disabled are among the poorest, most deprived, at the bottom of the heap, and they have no representation because they cannot speak for themselves. E.g. recently, a severely disabled child was buried alive.

- There needs to be greater promotion of collaboration between countries in organising joint projects and activities to bring about development for the disabled.

2.3 CONCURRENT WORKSHOPS

The six topics covered in the concurrent workshops

included Education, Vocational Training and Employment, Access to the Built Environment, Self-help and Independent Living, Assistive Technology and Women with Disabilities.

The main points raised were as follows:

- The disabled should be exposed to the idea of a career life from an early stage in education, probably from the lower secondary school level. This involves attitude preparation and equipping them with the necessary skills e.g. capacity-building activities for the intellectually disabled in Singapore included joint cooking activities and the kite-painting project together with able-bodied school children.

- Education should equip disabled children with skills to prepare them for vocational training and enhance their employability.

- Convention 159 drawn up by the ILO should be ratified by all governments as a guide to developing employment opportunities for the disabled.

- Access to the built environment and transportation should be dealt with together as part of infrastructural

development and this could have a significant impact on travel and tourism. E.g. Taiwan is developing a camp site where the amenities and even facilities for extreme sports will be accessible to the disabled.

- Self-help and independent living means empowerment, self-determination, helping one another, speaking and acting for ourselves, making our own decisions and choices, having a say in determining the services being provided.

- Women with disabilities need to be empowered through capacity-building programmes and by being given opportunities to take charge in responsible positions.

3. FIELD VISITS

The options included:

3.1 ACCESSIBILITY TO HOUSING AND TRANSPORT

Delegates were able to visit the North-East Line, travelling on the light-rail train and have a tour of the Housing and Development Board flats which have been modified for senior citizens.

3.2 RESIDENTIAL CARE AND SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Delegates were able to visit the Movement for the Intellectually Disabled (MINDS), Thrift Shop, the Singapore Cheshire Home (an institutional care that promotes independent living), and the Bizlink Centre (which provides assessment and job placement for the disabled).

3.3 ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY AND SHELTERED WORKSHOPS

Delegates were able to tour the Society for the Physically Disabled (SPD) and the Spastic Children's Association of Singapore, and view the assistive technology at the Singapore Association of the Visually Handicapped and the Singapore Association for the Deaf.

4. CONCLUSION

The first APDF Forum can be summed up in some of the following statements that were made as follows:

- Vision without action or

action without vision will result in no change; vision and action together only can bring about change.

- The main task in the work for the disabled is not to foresee the future but to enable it.

- Inclusion means recognising the fact that "there is nothing about us without us".

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Since such organisations as MCR and MAB have been involved in the work of the Asia-Pacific Decade when it first began in 1993, it would be a good idea for these organisations to continue being part of the disability movement in the Asia-Pacific region by becoming members of the newly formed body called the Asia-Pacific Disability Forum (APDF). This would be a good way of promoting joint partnership between the disabled and non-disabled in advancing developments in the work for and of the disabled. The membership is only US\$50 per annum.

5.2 Greater effort should be made to explore the idea of carrying out collaborative

projects and activities between organisations on the international level such as joint seminars, development workshops to discuss improvement of services for the disabled, staff exchange for employment enhancement, exchange visits to share information, etc.

Prepared by:

(GODFREY OOI, AMN)
Deputy Executive Director,
MAB and Vice President
MCR

December 30, 2003

**IF YOU KNOW
OF ANY BLIND
PERSON NEEDING
REGISTRATION FOR
EDUCATION OR
REHABILITATION,
PLEASE CONTACT
US IMMEDIATELY**

**NCBM
Tel: 03-2272 4959
03-2272 1442**

**MAB
Tel: 03-2272 2676**

MY GUIDE-DOG, JUNIOR, DIED

by Firefly Bernie

I lost my guide-dog on October 21, 2003. He had been my only companion since I became multiply handicapped in a motor accident about ten years ago. Indeed, I had to undergo much pain and medical expenses only to see my best friend die 27 days later.

No taxi or public transport could take my dog to the government vet in Shah Alam. So I had to take my poor sick pug on my motorbike to the Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (UPM) in Serdang. I got lost and was delayed for two hours because of my partial blindness.

My dog was discharged on home leave on the weekend of September 27 - 28 after being treated with antibiotics. Unfortunately, he started passing out blood stools a day later. I took him back to UPM and they told me that an abscess had burst. They wanted to castrate him as he was suffering from orchitis.

Junior was again

discharged nine days later on Friday, October 10. However, his temperature shot up soon afterwards and a doctor from the private vet in Subang Jaya came over the next day (Saturday, October 11, 2003). He had Junior admitted for two nights and his condition stabilised. So he was discharged on Monday, October 13.

My dog became feverish again and I brought him back to Serdang. I was there by 8.00 a.m. on Wednesday, October 15. I had to pay a fee of RM400 although a kind doctor had reduced the amount from the original charge of RM700. I had to place another RM50 deposit in order for my dog to be re-admitted. This is for me a heavy expense as I am handicapped and unemployed and I receive an allowance of only RM200 per month from the Welfare Department. The private vet cost me another RM200!

By the time they put my dog down, I had spent a sum

of RM650. Fortunately, the private vet kindly waived the fee for euthanasia. It was then that I began to realise how little emphasis had been placed on

**The attempt
to silent a
man is the
greatest
honour you
can bestow on
him. It means
that you
recoqnise his
superiority to
yourself.**

(Joseph Sobran,
Universal Press
Sydicate)

veterinary research and support for household pets. According to the UPM doctors, the much talked about development of the RM54 million veterinary hospital at Putrajaya seven years ago is still unbuilt.

This is deplorable. Junior was my guide-dog but I had to beg, borrow or steal in order to foot his medical bills. Shortly after his death, I was warded at the UHKL for chronic pancreatitis. And I have yet to receive the new bill for boarding my five cats at the vet because somebody had to feed them.

In view of my bitter experience, I would like to appeal for some laws to be enacted that would provide protection for all pets which serve as aides to the handicapped. After consulting with several veterinary doctors at the hospital and private clinics, I wish to make the following recommendations which I believe will help to bring about a truer picture of the “model” caring society.

1. Free license and free medical treatment for animals used as aides to handicapped persons.
2. A pet allowance should be provided to encourage people to own pets, thereby

reducing pet dumping on the streets.

3. Provide medical relief or subsidy on pets for the low-income earners.

4. Provide subsidies for vaccination, nurturing and spraying of pets to reduce canine and feline-borne diseases and reduce pet dumping.

5. Medical certificates should be issued for ill pets so that owners can take time off to send their pets to the clinic.

6. Intensive care units should be available at all veterinary clinics which should incorporate 24-hour waiting rooms for owners.

(I had to travel 30 miles every day to visit my guide-dog because it refused to eat when I was not around. I also had to stay out at the canteen during the two hours the clinic was closed for lunch.)

7. Provide tax exemption on prosthesis and chemotherapy to discourage euthanasia of paralysed pets or those diagnosed with cancer.

8. Increase the government budget on canine/feline

medical research and support.

9. Since dog owners are required to purchase a license annually for their pets, some form of service or facility should be made available to them.

(In France, for example, litter bag dispensers and bins are made freely available at the parks and other public areas to enable pet owners to dispose of their dogs’ poo properly.)

In conclusion, I want us all to realise that canines are a special species of domesticated animal, particularly those trained to assist the handicapped. They need a place to belong; they have the right to belong!

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(Daniel J. Boorstin)

A POINT TO PONDER A FRIEND INDEED

by Wong Kow

I received a telephone call from a long-lost primary classmate last week. It gave me a real surprise when he told me that he was John Liew whom I had not met and even had hardly thought of, for exactly fifty years.

John told me that he had obtained my telephone number through my brother-in-law in a church activity in New Zealand. He just wanted to say hello and keep in touch with me again.

The call took us just around ten minutes and it was over. But, believe me or not, it just flashed my memory back half a century ago with lots and lots of sweet memories when John and I were studying together in Cameron Highlands in a remote village school. Interesting games and funny stories then kept popping up from my mind.

The incident above made

me realise that John was a friend indeed.

Just a simple act like telephoning somebody, dropping a line, sending a card or paying a visit could sometimes do wonders. Instead of being a recipient waiting for someone to call, we could play an active part to call or to cheer somebody up.

We could make lives more interesting to others as well as to ourselves.

It's time for
the
blind to
help the
blind

EARN SOME EXTRA CASH

Readers are invited to write for our publication, "THE NCBM OUTREACH". For articles published, payments are as follows:-

1. Original articles on the achievements of blind people or of an inspirational nature (about 500 words)
RM75.00
2. Articles containing ideas and suggestions for the improvement of NCBM or its member-organisations (about 500 words)
RM75.00
3. Articles on funny or unusual experiences (250 - 500 words)
RM35.00 - RM75.00
4. Interesting articles taken from magazines or documents of limited circulation.
RM10.00

(Note: Articles submitted by officials of NCBM or its member-organisations will not qualify for payment unless these submissions have nothing to do with their daily office duties.)

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