



Annual Newsletter - 2012

Dear Friends and Supporters of kanthari and Braille Without Borders (BWB),

2012 was the year of the Dragon. The dragon represents speed, power and progress; each one of these characteristics actually applied to the kanthari and BWB programmes in 2012. In this report we want to give you a review of the main highlights of the past year.

We have separated the overview in two parts: kanthari and Braille Without Borders:

kanthari

kanthari in Trivandrum, Kerala, South of India, offers a 7 month leadership program for visionaries who have overcome adversity and who are keen to drive ethical social change.

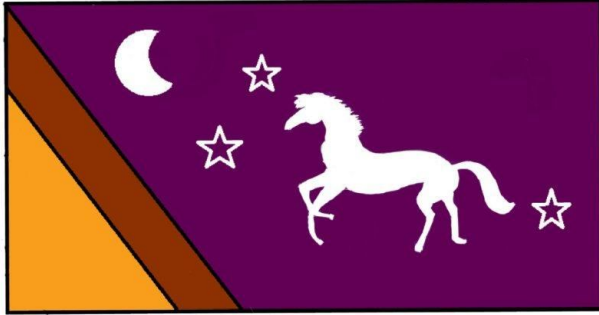
Kanthari fosters participants from all over the world. Some have university degrees while others have little to no formal education. Some are blind or physically disabled, others have no disabilities at all. What is important is a sense of ownership, motivation, creativity, talent and passion to make the world a better place and strength to be forces of good rather than victims of circumstance.

January

Most of the participants are family fathers or mothers and being away from their families for 11 months is quite a challenge. Therefore it was decided to shorten the course to 7 months. The course is very intense and not everyone can handle the speed therefore participants are selected carefully. The selection process is thorough and potential participants are being tested in many ways. They have to bring a clear vision, have to have a lot of intrinsic motivation and they should bring stamina. There are several steps that need to be mastered before a final decision is made. For those who are selected, a scholarship is provided that covers the entire course, full board and lodging and a 6 weeks lasting internship.



February



The unique "Journey in five acts" Curriculum was revised and fine-tuned for the fourth kanthari generation. During the first act, all participants "live and work" in a fictitious country. After Tansalesia (2009), Malaika Islands (2010) and Nabulai (2011) a new country was introduced: The Democratic Republic of 'Chichuhlonga'.

During 10 weeks the participants have to establish their dream projects in Chichuhlonga. The country offered a very realistic setting in which the participants

are confronted with all real life challenges that are faced when starting up social initiatives and projects. In Chichuhlonga, mistakes can be made without having serious consequences, once made here, such mistakes can be prevented in the real world later.

March

The "Bornheimer" is an award that is given to pedagogues who developed unique learning methods. This year the award was given to the Founders of kanthari and Braille Without Borders. The Europa School has been a pioneer for successful inclusion. For us, it was a big honour to receive this award. We very much enjoyed the event in which the students performed several plays with the topic inclusion / exclusion.



April

Visiting projects of kanthari graduates. It is always encouraging to receive updates from our graduates, but even better is to see results first hand. In the spring of this year we visited several projects that were set up by our graduates: Pynhoi in Meghalaya, Drolma in Lhasa/Tibet and Khom Raj Sharma in Nepal. Pynhoi directs an organization that provides education, medical care and care of disabled people. Drolma from Tibet started a social enterprise with hearing-impaired people producing Tibetan Door curtains and other textile items. Khom started a computer and language

school for the blind in Nepal. He generates funds by T-shirts that have Braille texts embroidered and through a program for volunteers.

May

kanthari lite. As the new kanthari course has been reduced to 7 months we now have the possibility to use the well-equipped campus for short intensive courses. These are aimed at marginalised groups of people within India. In May, together with the local NGO Chakshumati, we organized a training camp for blind young people. In 10 days app 30 blind and visually impaired students from Kerala received classes in mathematics, science and mobility training. The Blind in India don't have to study Math and Science after fifth grade. Initially this was welcomed by both, teachers as well as the blind students. However, soon the blind students realized that they were not able to start any technical study and therewith miss potential



employment opportunities. So this course helped the participants to catch up on math and science skills.

June

At an annual Dialogue in the Dark (DiD) conference in Milan, Sabriye, was invited to speak on the topic "Do you need vision to be a visionary?". DiD, founded by German social entrepreneur Andreas Heineke, offers exhibitions where visitors explore the fascinating world of the unseen. In October 2013 the annual DiD conference will take place at the kanthari campus in Trivandrum. We can highly recommend a visit to DiD exhibitions all over the world. <http://www.dialogue-in-the-dark.com/>



July



"Chichuh!" "Malaba Mawaku!" These are common greetings in Chichuhlonga, a fictitious country which for 10 weeks was the playing field for all participants and catalysts. Chichuhlonga means "Land of a thousand dreams". The participants were given the task to set up their own social projects and were confronted with real life challenges. All kanthari colleagues played a role; there were ministers, officials, a president, diplomats from neighboring countries, journalists, businessmen etc. All with their own agenda, some ethical and honest, others un-ethical and corrupt. Chichuhlonga has a national anthem, a country flag and a national currency named "Chilong".

August:

Green life. During the first act, participants learn about event management by organizing one here in Trivanrum. The theme this year was about leading an environmental conscious lifestyle. The target group consisted of 150 students of surrounding high schools. The participants organized games, an interactive geography session and a campus tour during which all environmental technologies were explained. The campus is built in a low cost and environmentally style which includes the following technologie,s solar, wind and biogas, rain water harvesting, grey water treatment, an organic vegetable garden, solar powered LED streetlights compost production etc.



September

The first act of the Curriculum, always ends with a "big bang". Four teams were given the task to realize a social enterprise as well as a theoretical social initiative/project. It was important that these initiatives resembled their personal project ideas. Each team presented their ideas to an international team of experts. This event provided the participants with an opportunity to speak in public, to experience a Questions and Answers session which prepared them for the graduation dream speeches.

October

What happens to you if you are either not able to see, to hear, to walk or use your arms? This is what many Trivandrumites found out while visiting the Transform Trivandrum exhibition. Taking away a sense or ability forces an individual to find solutions in order to cope with daily life. Visitors were assigned in groups of 4 and each group member was limited by taking away one of the above mentioned senses or abilities. The groups had to go through a course that included many obstacles and in order to pass these the members needed to find solutions and work as a team. About 150 visitors came and experienced an “unusual” day. Feedback received showed that such an experiential exhibition can function as a mind-opener and fosters creative potential! The exhibition was a part of the kanthari curriculum and offered a great “hands on” learning experience for all involved.



November

The third act of the kanthari Curriculum is a 6 weeks lasting internship. During this internship the participants implement a well defined project or task that will benefit the host organization. At the same time the participants will also learn skills from the host about how to run an organization. Tayo worked on setting up a social network for the organization where he learned bee-keeping skills. Sristi, who want to start a home for elderly disabled people and orphans did her internship in an establishment for elderly women. Sristi provided valuable ideas for activities that helped to improve the day to day quality of life.

December

Post Apocalypse Party

In case the world would not have come to an end on the 21st of December we had planned to have a Post Apocalypse Party on New Year 's Eve. All participants had returned from their internships and started the feast with lots of dancing and singing. Tamas gave a spectacular fire-spinning performance on the boat jetty. The New Year 2013 was welcomed by everyone with the words: "Hurrah, we have survived! The world is still turning!"



Braille Without Borders

Braille Without Borders (BWB) is an international organization which, initially was founded to serve blind people in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). Braille is used as the basic tool to impart literacy to the blind. In one way “Without Borders” means that BWB can work anywhere in the world, but in a more important sense it means that BWB sets no borders, boundaries, or limits for the blind.

January

A new law was introduced in the Autonomous Region in Tibet. The law states that blind and physically disabled children have the right to attend any regular school. BWB students have played a role in how

this law came about as they have previously successfully integrated themselves in mainstream schools. The new law now provides more security for the future of many blind and partially sighted students. However, successful self- or pro-active integration is only possible if the students are well prepared before attending regular schools, so a pre-paratory system should be in place.

February

A freak storm caused serious damage to several buildings in our vocational training farm in Shigatse. Thanks to immediate action of our colleagues, repairs were made quickly and the training was not affected.

March

Tibetan speech synthesizer Orca;

Tennom, one of our colleagues in Lhasa, had already developed a Tibetan version of Ubuntu. In addition and in cooperation with Gyendsen and other blind colleagues, he also created a speech synthesizer for Tibetan. This program is named Orca. This program means a big step forward for blind and partially sighted people in Tibet, now not all Tibetan texts need to be printed anymore but can be read with the help of the computer.

April

Nyima Wangdu went to Beijing to talk about BWB and his own life at a TEDxFactory798 event.

The farm becomes greener year by year as the compost production increases annually.

In April many maintenance matters were addressed that were not possible to repair during the winter and below zero degrees temperature period.

May

A baby Bull was born in our vocational training farm. The students who integrated themselves into regular schools wrote their mid-term exams and had excellent scores. 40 regular primary school teachers visited the BWB preparatory school in Lhasa and were introduced to methods of how blind students learn. Five BWB students left for Beijing for three months intense training in medical massage and physiotherapy.

June

Baguettes and other French delicacies are now being baked on the BWB farm. The NGO "Shanghai Young Bakers" (SYB) trains marginalized youth in the art of baking. Two of our colleagues, Basang Lamu and Tse Drolkar, went to Shanghai to study bakery and teaching skills. The best SYB graduates were selected to visit Tibet in order to help Basang Lamu and Tse Drolkar to get the bakery and training of our blind students started. Next to providing training, the bakery will also function as an income generating facility. On the following link, there is a short film about the visit of SYB's graduates: <http://www.tudou.com/programs/view/KwFwCWh5MfM/>





July - Braille Without Borders - INDIA

The mobile blind school concept was developed by N. Krishnaswami, an 84-year former Chief inspector of Tamil Nadu. If blind children don't have an opportunity to go to school, then the school should go to them. Jyothirgamaya (from darkness to light) is the name for the mobile blind school program that is run by Braille Without Borders in Kerala. The program was flagged off by the Kerala Ministers of Labor and Social Affairs. Jyothirgamaya is lead by Tiffany Brar, a local blind young woman, who travels through the villages and cities in Southern Kerala to train blind children in reading, writing Braille, basic computer, mobility and orientation skills.

August

The China Daily published an article titled "The Power of the Sun" featuring Nyima, our former student and now project coordinator of the BWB project in Lhasa. Nyima is 24 years old and joined BWB when he was 15. He had never been to school, but we recognized his potential early on and made sure that he was able to study abroad. He got his Cambridge Certificate in England, completed the kanthari course in India and last summer he participated in a computer course in Malaysia. Currently Nyima not only manages the BWB preparatory school, but also coordinates the self-integration program and the medical massage training.

http://europe.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-09/12/content_15752856.htm

September

Lucky in an unlucky situation. On September 17th a minor disaster took place. A hail storm swept through the farm which damaged crops and caused the collapse of a part of the roof of the recently renovated music room. Some keyboards and various other instruments were damaged as well and could not be used anymore. Some of the students were having class during the time of the collapse. Most important, they were able to get out in time and no-one got hurt.

October

On the fifteenth of October, White Cane Day was celebrated by Braille Without Borders. Nyima and Gyendsen had invited more than one hundred fifty people from around Lhasa, of which most of them are blind. They also invited people from different schools and the local police station. The goal was to create a wider awareness about what blind people are capable of doing and of course the importance of the white cane. Journalists from local radio stations and news papers covered the event.

November

At the BWB preparatory school the students are being encouraged to think critically and to find creative solutions. This leads to self confidence and independence. This is important to be able to stand strong in the world of the sighted. It sometimes leads to the fact that injustice is being addressed very directly and because of this some of the students end up on the sideline again. We witnessed this last autumn when 4 of our blind and partially sighted students dropped out of



middle school. All of them were good students and they only had a few more months to go till the end of the school year but something had bitten them with the result that they decided to take their life in their own hands. They now are in Beijing where they attend a medical massage training. Nyima Chokpa has successfully passed high school and is considered to be one of the 10 most promising pupils Tibet. She is the first blind student in Tibet that is taking on the College – examinations. Nyima Chokpa would like to be a writer and historian.

December

In our farm in Shigatse Christmas came with unexpected and unwanted fireworks. On Christmas Eve the main transformer blew and caused many light bulbs to blow up as well, also some computers got damaged. Most important though was that no one got hurt. For 1,5 days we didn't have any electricity and on a frozen Himalayan plateau at minus 17 degrees Celsius at nearly 4000 metres altitude that was quite a challenge. The cold didn't seem to disturb the students from enjoying "Chrissemisse" (as they call it) to the MAX.

We want to thank all to our catalysts and volunteers who have supported the work of kanthari and Braille Without Borders from far and on campus;

A big THANK YOU goes to;

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Gurad, India, journalist of the Hindu Kingdom daily, how to keep a spokesperson
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Kevin Brinkmann, India, Instructional Design Consultant , the art of storytelling
Magali Mores, Luxembourg, political scientist , Chichuhlonga role play: Pharma expert
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Thank you also to all other volunteers and experts that supported the work of kanthari-BWB.

- Special thanks goes to **David Sexton**; David was a graduate of the 2010 kanthari-course and worked with kanthari as IT System Administrator. He is now in Meghalaya, where together with 2012 graduate Battihun Mary he started "the Golden Bridge" initiative.
- For her great work in the area of administration and for creating organizational structure we want to sincerely thank **Cathy Jordan** from Australia. Cathy worked as the Director operations and now started a journey around the world.
- For his tireless efforts of empowering the participants as well as the kanthari organization, we want to say thank you very much to **Sandeep Kirpalani**. He has been a catalyst in the areas of accounting, profit and loss reports. As he became infected by the social-project-fever he decided to go all the way to Melbourne in Australia to development studies.

If you know anyone who is interested to participate in the work of kanthari in any way, be it as future participant, as a catalyst (trainer), a volunteer, or someone who would like to financially support kanthari-BWB, we would appreciate it very much, if you can share this newsletter with him/her/them.

On behalf of all of our pupils, students, all participants and employees in Tibet and India, we also want to thank you for your interest in and support to kanthari-BWB!

With warm regards,

Sabriye Tenberken and Paul Kronenberg
 Founders



www.kanthari.org

www.braillewithoutborders.org

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