

# Quarterly News 3 - 2013

*Dear Friends and Supporters of kanthari and Braille Without Borders (BWB),  
The third quarter of 2013 came and went, so it is time for another newsletter. We will start with updates from the Himalayan Plateau followed by updates on kanthari in Kerala.*

## Braille Without Borders, Tibet

### Preparatory school Lhasa

Gyentsen, a former BWB student nowadays coordinates the Braille Book Printing house and library. He studied in a regular elementary school in Tibet, Computer science in Malaysia and management at kanthari in the South of India. Last August he married a former colleague. As the project in Lhasa is being managed more and more by our former students, the following updates on the Lhasa project were provided by Gyentsen.



### The Rabbits jump:

In August, five Rabbit-class-students graduated from the Braille Without borders preparatory school. They learned everything they need to know in order to integrate themselves into a regular school. All five received training in mobility, daily living skills, communication, basic computer use, English, Tibetan and Chinese. These skills form a good basis for their further schooling. The school they now attend is in Pelshong, right next to BWB's vocational training farm. Four of them were happy and highly motivated. Only one, Migmar Wangdu decided to come back to Lhasa. He missed the BWB preparatory school and didn't want to face upcoming challenges. But when we talked to him and his parents and described the possible future opportunities of the blind, and especially when we explained that some of our former graduates have even entered university, Migmar and his parents were finally convinced that \*self-integration is the right path. He went back to Pelshong and is now a happy student.

\*“Self integration” or “pro-active integration” is a model developed by BWB over the past 15 years in Tibet. The goal is that blind students, if adequately trained, don't have to depend on social workers or special teachers when they integrate in regular schools. Real integration is only possible when a blind child pro-actively participates. In addition the student will need sufficient self-confidence and he/she should possess the basic skills and knowledge in order not to be only a “consumer” but also to be able to “share” his/her skills. Therefore it is important that the blind students learn language skills, have good mobility and orientation skills and that they are able to solve problems.

5 Former Rabbit class students



## The door-opener:

Last June, for the first time in Chinese history, four blind students, together with their sighted peers, have written their university entrance exams. Despite the fact that they scored good grades, the students were not immediately admitted by the Universities. Thanks to the support of a long term supporter, MR Chegang, all students were lucky to be placed in the University of their Preference. Mr Chegang also organized sponsors for all four students. We are grateful for this enormous help. With his initiative he opened the doors, not only for our four blind students but for many more in the future, in China and beyond.



## Actor's award for the blind:

Pasang and Dawa Tsering, two BWB students, received an award by the department of cultural affairs for acting in a drama. The drama was conducted by a BWB teacher, Karma Choedon and supervised by Tupten, a famous Tibetan actor. It was about blindness and how blind people are capable to travel around and adapt in society. We believe that this example will motivate other blind children and/or adults to stand up and follow their dreams.

## Return home:

Yudun, a former BWB student has returned from her studies in Tibet and Beijing and has joined the preparatory school in Lhasa as a Chinese teacher.

## Vocational training farm, Shigatse

### Self-Integration

The self integration program that was developed by BWB has shown significant change in the lives of blind young people in Tibet. Some of our former students have initiated projects, others are running their businesses and some went home to help out on their parents farms. A major challenge however, and this is shared with blind people the world over is to become employed. The sighted society seems not to be ready (yet) to entrust certain tasks to the blind. On one hand, we try to empower the blind so they can use their newly learned skills to integrate themselves into society. On the other hand though, we try to create a mindset shift amongst the sighted people so they understand that blind people are capable of doing many different kinds of tasks and take up several responsibilities.



### BWB Music Band

Ngudrup, the BWB music teacher and Dechen Yudun, have formed a BWB band. Ngudrup is the main teacher and Dechen Yudun as a talented singer train more and more students in musical skills. Till date the BWB band has performed in local events and has now been invited to perform at several events in mainland China. They play classical Tibetan music and also self written compositions. We wish them lots of success.

## Kanthari, Kerala

### Donor-conference

What moves donors to support your cause? During act One, our participants live and learn in a fictitious developing country with the name "Chichuhlonga". In groups existing of 5 to 6 members, they had to start and run their dream projects and set up a business. They worked together, fell together and stood up again together. In the two-and-a-half-months journey they learned everything they need to create a mindset changing social venture.

Towards the end of act one, participants had a chance to send proposals about their social projects to different Chichuhlongan departments, Businesses, foundations and embassies of neighboring countries.



During a donor's conference, the participants received tough feedback which was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to learn what they had done right and where there was room for improvement. It was a very practical learning experience to be prepared for the real world including its challenges when it comes to fundraising.

### **Goodbye Chichuhlonga:**

Four NGOs; "Creativity Unlimited", "Rise and Shine", "Parivarthan" and "Wheels for Change" waved Chichuhlonga goodbye. Over an intensive ten weeks working period they created social ventures for alternative education, vocational training for unemployed youth, a campaign for women and people with disabilities, and a mobile outreach program.

### **kanthari talks**

"Chichuhlonga" the country of "a million dreams" closed down with a big bang named "kanthari talks", a speakers springboard with spice. It was a day filled with fiery and inspirational speeches, but not only by our kantharis. For this day we invited also little chilies from local English medium schools. They brought their dreams and were coached by kanthari catalysts and participants on the best ways of presenting them. Similar to our participants, they conducted their speeches in teams. Their topics were child labor, unhealthy food and child abuse. All speeches were received with great enthusiasm by the many visitors in the auditorium as well as by many viewers who tuned in on the live stream that ran on our website.

### **One step from dream to reality:**

After having been trained in various techniques, tools and methods, after having survived and managed several major crises, the participants had 3 weeks time to work on their personal project proposals. Three weeks seemed to be a long time but already after the first few days, panic started to rise. All participants realized that the proposal is just the final output, the major work however needed to go into rethinking and transforming their dreams. Catalysts assisted in consulting the participants. They gave written and verbal feedback. In the end, the best proposals find their way to BWB Germany and BWB Switzerland. Both organizations have put an amount aside for start-up funding of high quality and impactful social ventures.

### **Business not as usual:**

It was a day in September when 50 Students from the brand new Rajadhani Business School visited the kanthari campus. We were not sure what they expected, but certainly not this. The Business school students visit took place when the kanthari participants were in the middle of a fundraising workshop. kanthari participants presented their ideas on 4 different theoretical fundraising events: A fair to present products of social enterprises, a fundraising dinner, an awareness campaign for parents of children with disabilities, and a media event about how to create a mindset change. The business students were speechless at first but later they asked many questions about kanthari and its philosophy. And.. they selected a winning team. "Fashion without borders" who developed a media campaign in which genders don't matter, disabilities are celebrated, and people are not judged for what they are and represent.



## UST Global, supporter of the first hour

The CEO, Mr Sajan Pillai, of UST global (a Trivandrum based IT-company) invited all 22 participants and all catalysts to an exchange meeting. All participants did a fiery and inspiring mini dream speech of one minute each. This was followed by an interesting interaction with the UST management members. Thomas from Liberia was interested in the most impactful way of Corporate Social Responsibility. And both, kanthari management and UST management saw our long-term relationship as a good example for effective CSR. UST supported financially, sends experts as short-term catalysts and offers space for interns. They also support by applying their expertise in program and website development for kanthari. We offer our campus for client visits who are interested in the CSR-program and who get a chance to meet many spicy social visionaries and we give motivational speeches for UST staff and clients.

## Change for a change

The kanthari participants started their next chapter of the “a journey in five acts” Curriculum. In addition to proposal writing and fundraising-workshops, participants went on field trips to tribal communities in Wayanad and around Trivandrum. The goal was to realize a fundraising campaign to support a local tribal community project as well as the creation of a feature film. The film showcases the journey of four African participants traveling through Wayanad where they explore the unique culture of the local tribal community. Over the past week the participants went to many schools in Trivandrum to present the documentary and to speak about the tribal issues relating to education, land, and livelihood.

## Spreading the kanthari spice

The kanthari and Braille-without-border's philosophies become more and more interesting to business colleges around the world. Since 2012 we experienced a fruitful exchange with IMD, a business school in Lausanne, Switzerland. Dr Howard Yu has visited kanthari twice to train our participants in creating path breaking objectives and strategies. We have spoken at IMD in regards to social change and social entrepreneurship. Dr Matthew Simmons, another IMD-professor, visited the BWB center in Tibet with his students and the Swedish Jonkoping University wants to send students to Kerala to create a case study of the kanthari model. The spice is spreading and the kanthari seeds will slowly spread into the world's back- and front-yards.

## Publicity

The Guardian wrote an article about Tiffany's BWB mobile Blind school in Kerala it was titled "India's mobile school for blind students puts empowerment on the curriculum." Read the complete article at <http://www.kanthari.org/empowerment/>

An article with the title “Kanthari: a Leadership Training Institute for Those Who Wish to Create a Better Society” was published on the blog of startoholics. Read the interesting article at <http://www.kanthari.org/startoholics-interview/>

A brief feature on kanthari was broadcasted the 7<sup>th</sup> of September 2013 on “Right To be Heard”. The title was: “kanthari an organisation helping people from across the globe launch their social projects.” You can see the clip at at <http://tinyurl.com/pkemokr>

## News from kanthari Graduates:

2012 #Kanthari Graduate Karthik from Pondicherry wrote us with exciting news. His project named “Sristi Foundation” is now registered under the Trust Act. Karthik wants to create a village that will serve as a model community which is inclusive irrespective of cast, religion or disability. He registered together with three disabled persons who grown up with him one health professional.

Ojok Simon, Uganda: Ojok, 2012 kanthari graduate has completed the first training program for Blind Bee Keepers in Uganda. 15 rural blind and partially sighted beneficiaries graduated and received Hollow trees which they use as bee-hives. They are now empowered to keeping bees and produce healthy and valuable honey! We congratulate Ojok with this great result and say Keep Up your great work!

Manglu, Kerala, India: 2012 kanthari graduate Manglu Sreedhar supports tribal peers in Kerala by setting up a new Curriculum! Read all about it at: <http://tinyurl.com/oc23omy>

Anja Pfaffenzeller, Bats in Action, Brasil: Being blind herself, Anja, 2011 kanthari graduate, is very motivated to empower the blind. She wrote the following; "I just came back from a nearby rural town where I identified six blind children and adolescents. I got canes for all of them and came home with a broom stick because there was no cane left for me. Now it's really urgent to make canes from bamboo".



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*Dear Friends and Supporters,*

*As you can read, many things have happened during the past few months. The new group of participants are all working hard at the kanthari course and we are very happy that finally blind students in Tibet will have a possibility to study in University. All of this would not have been possible without your support! On behalf of all our students, participants and colleagues, we want to say thank you very much for your continuous support and we wish all of you a wonderful summer, With warm regards from Kerala and from Tibet,*

*the entire BWB – kanthari team Sabriye and Paul*

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