



## Quarterly Newsletter 4-2020

**“What the New Year brings to you will depend a great deal on what you bring to the New Year.”**

Vern McLellan

Well... we have finally reached a new year, and hopefully one that will go into the history books as ‘the year in which the Corona virus was defeated’. Thinking about it, it is simply incredible what a virus, that is invisible to the eye, is capable of doing. It came in like a wrecking ball and caused a lot of destruction. Yet, it has also unleashed an energy that seemed to be hiding somewhere in humanity. Suddenly, local leaders stood up within communities and groups of people who had been affected in one or the other way. They took steps required to make sure that those who were vulnerable got the care and support they needed to make ends meet. At the time this is written, the pandemic is far from over, but glimmers of hope are visible on the horizon. Vaccines have been developed and we certainly hope that soon enough the pandemic will be a memory of the past.

*We wish to thank you and all others who have continued to support the work that we do. We were not able to do a leadership training course, however, thanks to your support, we were able to keep our team together and focus on several other activities. In this quarterly newsletter, we wish to share a few updates about this. Additionally, we wish to share a few examples of what some of our kanthari graduates have been up to. We are sure that the glimmers of positive action will help to bring some rays of light in these short and rather dark days.*

### **Starting date of the next course:**

With ‘uncertainty’ having become a new partner in daily life, we slowly had to get accustomed. We however, managed to adapt and get things done in a different way. Many people contacted us and suggested that we should do the course online. We had given this some thought, but anyone who has gone through the kanthari course understands that many of these experiences can’t be replaced by zoom sessions. Knowing this, we found a compromise and we came up with the following solution. We split the course up in two parts. Part one, which is 7 weeks, includes all that can be done online. And part two, a journey of 6 months, that includes the hands-on training portion. We will be starting the online part in April and hopefully the on-campus journey in June 2021.

### **The kanthari spice box – encyclopedia for change**

In our previous quarterly newsletter, we had already mentioned that we have been working on a digital encyclopedia. The good news is that after 10 months of hard work, the kanthari spice box is now online. It



Braille Training at NHFB in Ghana



KR Raja meeting with beneficiaries in India

contains 100+ chapters and 1000+ sub chapters, over 700 topics, specially made drawings and Photographs, downloadable templates, and various sound files, as a gift for all kantharis who are out there, struggling or succeeding, for those change makers who have already started and have been running their project for years and for those who due to any reason have not begun their projects yet. It is meant as a treasure chest filled with tools and useful explanations for all aspects of running an organization and creating a long-lasting difference.

### Maintenance

We have also taken up several maintenance and construction work. The kitchen and storage room have been completely renovated and a shed for garden tools was built. And while our lake cleaning activities continued, we also worked on further research on products that can be made from water hyacinths.

### Emergency support continues

We are continuing our support to those kantharis and/or their beneficiaries who are facing existential challenging times due to the pandemic. Thanks to the support we have received till date, we were able to help 8000+ people in over 20 countries. In case you are able to contribute to the emergency fund, or you can inform others who can, donations can [be made here](#). Any amount helps! Thank you so much!

### Updates about the work of kantharis across the world:

**Eric Ofori** from Ghana, a 2009 kanthari is the founder of **New Horizon Foundation of the Blind (NHFB)**. The center provides practical daily living skills and education for the blind. Like everywhere else, due to the lockdown, from one day to the next, physical classes were not possible anymore. Eric's response was to look at alternative ways to continue training and it was found in the form of using phones. A supporter provided the phones and not only the visually impaired and blind students, but also the parents of these children received remote training. Currently, Eric and his team are busy with preparations for the time after the pandemic and hope to soon welcome students to the centre again. <http://nhfbghana.org/>

**Ruangtup Kaeokamechun** is a 2018 kanthari graduate from Thailand and the founder of **Hinghoy Noy**. Ruang got to know that domestic violence and child abuse had increased during the pandemic. She acted by starting a website where children can share their grievances in a safe space. Topics like death, divorce, and sexual orientation are considered taboos in Thai society. After the death of her father, Ruangtup looked for books to find consolation, however the lack of the same motivated her to create children's books that openly discuss 'sensitive' topics and help children face the realities of life. <https://www.hinghoynoy.com/>

**KR Raja** from India is a 2011 kanthari graduate and the founder of **Global Network for Equality**. GNE provides education, healthcare, legal support, and other services that are required to give opportunities to children of prisoners and additionally advocates for a rehabilitation approach towards prisoners. Raja shared a touching message with us: "This year Diwali was special to us because a former life convict came forward to sponsoring two girl children with monthly 1000 Rupees. Additionally, he visited these two children along with his wife and two sons to present Diwali gifts. They said that it is a joy be able to give back. After spending more than 14 years behind bars, he was released from the prison in 2018. This reformed person is supporting these girls wholeheartedly with his hard-earned money as a Rickshaw Driver. his two sons were supported by GNE for their education with scholarship. Note: The father of these two girls is now serving life sentence in the prison on charges of spouse murder case. <http://gnequality.org/>



Rhythm of Life Online GirlSummit



Computer training for the blind in The Gambia

**Alieu Jaiteh** is a 2011 kanthari graduate and founder of **Start Now**. His center, which is located in Brikama in the West Coast Region of the Gambia, trains blind people in the use of technology to improve accessibility, as well as provides training to build self-confidence and independence. Currently, training is ongoing. The lockdown had eased up since mid-October and life is reasonably back to normal. Recently, 7 new students joined after the lockdown. As part of his 2019 Holman Prize award, he trained 80 visually impaired persons across rural Gambia. In November, Alieu and his team travelled to the Central River Region where they trained 20 blind and partially sighted participants. For them, it was life changing. Watch a documentary about this training [here](http://www.startnowgambia.org). [www.startnowgambia.org](http://www.startnowgambia.org).

**Harriet Kamanyashu** is a 2013 kanthari graduate and founder of **Rhythm of Life Uganda**. Her organization works to protect and empower HIV-positive sex workers and their daughters in the red-light districts of Kampala. She wrote: "Yes, Covid-19 affected us too as most of the community health outreaches and support meetings were no longer possible. However, it was also a time to think outside the box. We were able to hold the national girls' summit virtually and our girl leaders took part in the 6 weeks global training about leadership and empowerment on climate change advocacy." <https://rhythmoflifeuganda.org/>

#### kanthari and kantharis in the media:

The Giraffe Heroes Foundation, an organisation who highlights the work of exceptional change makers, has featured several kantharis in podcasts. Click on the links to listen:

- [Trevor Molife from Zimbabwe](#), founder of Purple Hand Africa who works with the LGBTQI community
- [Sristi KC from Nepal](#), founder of Blind Rocks! Who works to empower the blind.
- [Tony Joy from Nigeria](#), founder of Durian who works on children and women empowerment
- [Abhijit Sinha from India](#), founder of ProjectDEFY who works on alternative education
- [Ojok Simon from Uganda](#), founder of Hive Uganda, who trains blind people in beekeeping
- [Empowering the Marginalized](#), interview with Sabriye.

kanthari was also covered in [MadeHerStory](#) An article about kanthari was published in [Newzhook](#) And weekly blog posts can be found on <https://www.kanthari.org/coronablog/>

---

*We want to thank you for your ongoing support and for sharing this newsletter with friends and family!*

*Please take good care, protect yourself and protect others, stay safe and stay healthy!  
We are wishing you ALL the very best for 2021, a new year that will bring new chances and opportunities! with warmest regards from Kerala, India*

*the kanthari team, sabriye and paul*

---

You can support kanthari [here](#) – THANK YOU for your help!  
[www.facebook.com/kantharis](https://www.facebook.com/kantharis) - [www.kanthari.org](http://www.kanthari.org)