

Braille Without Borders

Quarterly News 3 - 2012

Kanthari, Kerala Hungarian fire spinning

The lights go out, kerosene smells fill the air. 30 of about 600 visitors start to applaud; all others wait in silence for a performance that was announced in all the newspapers to be a real happening. "The blind fire-spinner from Europe"

Tamas enters the stage and the cheers get louder. The music he has chosen to support his act begins with a hiss and rhythmic finger clicks. Balls which were soaked in kerosene are ignited, and he starts to spin them around. Suddenly the fire on one of the balls goes out. The balls continue to turn around his body and his head. Karthik, his companion who is sighted tries to stop him, but Tamas doesn't hear, the music is now so loud that only one thing helps. Karthik throws himself into the rotating balls, risking being hit by the flames, stops Tamas, re-ignites the second ball and Tamas puts up a great performance. See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMez4j2wK68>
Tamas Barko comes from Hungary. He's here in kanthari International to realize his dream, he wants to empower blind people through dance and improvisation. Later, he wants to initiate a blind traveling circus to convince sighted people that a blind person can do more than just singing songs.

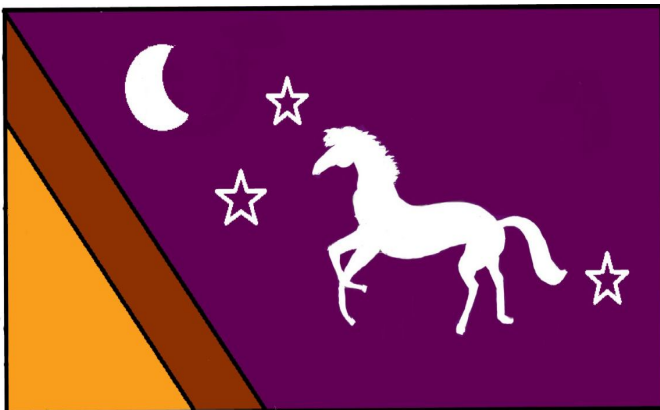
1. From Chichuhlonga to Kerala

The Chichuhs, that's how inhabitants of Chichuhlonga are called, said goodbye to their current home with a "big bang". For two months, our participants had the opportunity to test their skills in a fictitious country. All kanthari-staff members had a role to play. There were ministers, a president, corrupt and non-corrupt officials, influential diplomats from neighboring countries, good and bad journalists, sound and unsound businessmen, an anthem, a flag and even a state bank; "The Bank of Chichuhlonga" with its own currency, the Chilong.

Four teams were given the task to set up a real business and a theoretical social project.. It was important that the projects in Chichuhlonga were related to the projects that each participant wants to set up once back in his/her own country. Each participant brought their life experience and vision for the future and each team presented the result to an international panel on the 15th September. Here a brief overview of the four teams and their projects:

A. Team Mahibala created the organization "Blind Sparks" which is based on the preparatory school concept of Braille Without Borders.

The four participants, Hernando (Colombia), Jacqueline (Ghana), Bruce (USA). and





Laishram (India) want to continue to work together in the future by creating "Blind Sparks International". As a business idea they made tactile maps and wooden puzzles in the shape of continents that can be used to teach blind children geography in a playful way.

B. Team Babu realized their business idea in the form of sales of T-shirts. Battihun (Meghalaya / India), Patrick (Uganda) and Lawrence (Nigeria) had the idea to set up a project that provides an alternative home for single parents and their children.

This concept is based on Battihuns personal project idea. She comes from a tribe, where domestic violence forms a major problem. As a young girl she had always longed for an alternative home.

C. Charu. Moses Saa (Sierra Leone), Sristi (Nepal), Tamas (Hungary) and Nyasiri Mary (Kenya) planned the realisation of a combined home for elderly people forgotten by society, elderly people with disabilities and orphans. In this home the orphans learn to take care of the elderly. The idea came from Sristi who has experienced the faith of many old disabled people; "The worst that happens is that you will never have a family and have to die alone." Charu developed a plan that created a win win situation as the orphans will have "parents" and "grand parents" from which they can learn skills and in return, they can take care of elderly disabled people. In order to earn money for their project the team created Postcards depicting BWB-kanthari campus.

D. Team Slava, Manglu (Kerala / India), Tayo (Nigeria), Ojok (Uganda) and Karthik (Pondicherry / India), focused on street children. Their project "Hive Foundation" had the aim to train these children to become successful in business through training in Bee-keeping. Bee-keeping is related to many other vocations such as agriculture, animal care, wax and honey collecting, packaging, marketing, product design and more. The idea was based on Ojoks project that is already operational in Uganda. As a visually impaired experienced bee-keeper himself he wants to spread this concept to blind people in East Africa. The team was particularly resourceful in doing business. They developed a service company that offered services from washing cars, cleaning up the lake, organizing birthday parties etc etc.

To be able to realize these projects in real life, the teams were supported by catalysts who facilitated intensive sessions in the following subjects:

- The creation of a needs analysis through interviews with a potential target group
- Structured Thinking
- Preparation of a concept paper
- Branding and advertising
- Crisis Management: How to behave in a crisis
- Organising a press conference
- Fundraising by preparing requests for funding
- Event Management
- Public Speaking

In the Second Act our participants will use what they have learned in practice by working with local NGO's.

2. Alumni meeting our participants

"Can you hear me?" "Yes, you are clear." "Is Joseck still online?" "Hello, Yoshimi, I do not hear anything ..." This is how it sounds when you want to bring together four continents and four generations of kanthari graduates and participants via Skype. It was a Friday afternoon in July. 15 participants of the fourth generation in the audience sat silent and tense, and then they were all there, clearly as if they were amongst our midst. Yoshimi from Thailand, Marcus from Nigeria,



Vygandas from Lithuania, Joseck from Kenya and Khom from Nepal. Our participants were over the moon. They always had heard about the earlier graduates and now they had an opportunity to directly interact and learn about the successes and challenges of the “Kantharis in the wild world” reality.

Yoshimi Horiuchi, kanthari graduate 2009, has founded the organization Always Reading Caravan (ARC) in Thailand. The blind 29-year-old Japanese started a mobile library which holds Braille, talking and regular books and tactile images. She promotes literacy of people in the remote regions of central and eastern Thailand. ARC also already established a primary school for disadvantaged children from tribes in central Thailand.

Joseck Omskoyo Otungo, kanthari Graduate 2010, founded the organization Mbusie Development Project in Kenya. By providing micro-credits he supports blind and deaf persons by engaging them in activities primarily in agriculture, but also other sectors. He also encourages people with disabilities to use and develop their talents in specific other areas, such as sports.

At the end of the virtual meeting, the graduates gave our participants a few important tips; "During your time in kanthari concentrate on social contacts with your co-participants, you will never be surrounded again by so many people who believe in your project ideas Even family members and close friends are sceptical about your ideas. Make sure you build a strong network throughout the course on which you can fall back during project implementation!”.

3. Admissions for 2013

The application process for the kanthari course beginning May 2013 has already started. Those who carry a plan for social change, who speak, read and write English well and who have basic computer skills are encouraged to apply via the online application form at www.kanthari.org.

Tibet, Lhasa

1. A few weeks ago we got an email from my cousin in Paris. She accidentally saw an article in the China Daily Europe with the title: "The Power of the Sun". It was a report about Nyima, our former student and now project coordinator of the BWB project in Lhasa. Two pictures showing him in front of the entrance gate of the school and at work at our former desk. 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 in Tibet, looks after the massage training and also is involved in the marketing of products that are produced in our vocational training farm.

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

2. Shigatse

Lucky in an unlucky situation

On the 17th of September 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 cannot be used anymore. Some of the students were having class during the time of the collapse. Luckily they were in a corner that stayed intact and they were able to get out .

3. A new taste in the Pelshong Farm

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/>

Dear Friends and Supporters,

On behalf of all our students, participants and colleagues, we want to say thank you very much for your continuous support!

With best regards from Kerala and from Tibet,

Sabriye and Paul

Braille Without Borders and kanthari is now also on Facebook:

Please have a look and share the links as well as this newsletter with anyone who is interested of course we appreciate it if "Like" and "share" buttons can often be pressed. The addresses:

www.facebook.com/kantharis and
<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Braille-without-Borders/198613140184341>

MISSING:
CHANGEMAKER
“CARRIES A PLAN FOR SOCIAL CHANGE!”
 Kanthari course starting in May 2013!
 Apply at www.kanthari.org

