



"And then the shock, the surprise on the faces of the Keralite audience!" Bala, director of a local company, a friend and a long term IISE supporter, started laughing loudly. "Unfortunately, only about 100 people were in the hall. I only would have wished that there would have been more witnesses present.."

"So what is the new name of the IISE?" Bala's visitor became a little impatient. "Now..." Bala surely knows how to create tension into a story. "One would expect something like "The Asia Institute for Leadership" or the "Jasmine" or "Lotus Leadership School". But no! It is actually very straightforward and simple. The International Institute for Social Entrepreneurs is now named "Kanthari".

For many other Keralites, the new name causes reactions such as astonishment, laughter and a statement like "Now everything is clear to me!".

The Kanthari is a small, but extremely spicy hot Chilli, which grows wild in any garden across Kerala. Kanthari has medicinal qualities, is purifying and makes you extremely alert! In Malayalam, Kerala's local language, those who have the courage to stand up for their own opinion are named "Kanthari. With the name "Kanthari" we want to create a new symbol, a definition for all those, who question the status Quo and start ethical social change activities. Those who don't believe that a small group of people or even individuals can change the world, should once add a tiny Kanthari to a meal. It will then quickly become clear: a small Chili can make a HUGE difference.

Dear friends and supporters of Braille Without Borders,

The sun shines; a light breeze forms small waves on the lake; the dry warm season has arrived in the South of India. It is January, time to look back on another year.

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1. TIBET

1.1 Dream workshop

In the summer 1998, at the beginning of our Tibet adventure, we had a large dream. With great confidence and at that time a healthy portion of naivety, we noted it down. The result were the following five points:

- A preparatory school for blind children, in which the students would learn Braille, three languages, math, mobility and orientation training,





- A Braille book Printing press in which schoolbooks and literature in Tibetan, Chinese and English Braille were printed.
- A vocational training centre where students can choose to be trained in medical massage, agriculture, animal husbandry, cheese production, baking bread, market gardening, compost production, carpet weaving, knitting, kitchen management etc.
- A self integration program, in which blind children, adolescents and adults were enabled to integrate themselves in regular schools and occupations,
- And the final goal; the entire project should be run by our former blind students which would free us to concentrate on new projects.

At the time we planned all this, we were “too new” in the field of development. We didn’t expect the reactions when we shared the ideas with potential donors. Most heard remarks were; "Not at all realistic!", "Do not reach for the stars!", "Don’t give false hope to Tibet’s blind children!". We learned that most people don’t seem to believe in large dreams.

1.2 Tibet now:

This however was our goal and we just started to work. We broke the dream into small digestible bites and distributed these among several potential donors. We took one step at the time and at some point everything was realized. The preparatory school, the Braille printing press, the vocational training centre and the self integration program.

"Well," the skeptics said, "You managed to realize this, but what now? When you will leave Tibet, the project will collapse. Then, one will ask him/herself, what is a development project worth, if it cannot stand on its own feet?" So we took several steps to convert our fifth goal into reality. We selected Kyila, Gyendsen and Nyima, three blind pupils of our first and third generation to receive the necessary training.

Kyila and Nyima studied English in Totness in the UK. Gyendsen was trained in Malaysia and Japan in the techniques of Braille production. And all of them received 11 months training at the IISE in Kerala. So nowadays they are the ones who run a major part of the BWB program in Tibet. Kyila started her own kindergarten. Gyendsen is responsible for the first and only Braille printing press and Braille library in Tibet. And Nyima manages the preparatory school in Lhasa and represents the interests of the blind.

1.3. Blind Street theatre

Nyima, Gyendsen and one of our first Tibetan colleagues, Karma Choedon, have revised the curriculum and added several creative elements. The students now learn reading, writing, language skills and communication by telling and writing own stories and plays. These plays are then performed in Tibetan, Chinese or even English in several places in Lhasa. The stories vary from provoking tragedies, dramas to comedies which serve as a mirror to the audience. The main message carried in each play is that spectators understand that life as a blind person doesn’t have to be less fun as that of a sighted one.

1.4 Self integration continues

Successful Integration of blind students in regular schools is often only possible because of costly investments and lots of commitment on the part of parents and teachers. For example the situation in Germany: Often a civil service- or a social worker will sit next to a blind pupil to assist him/her during classes. But is this real ACTIVE integration?

In Tibet such a service is not available. On one side there are no social workers and on the other teachers lead classes with 40+ students which prevents them from dedicating sufficient time to a blind student. Out of this need, a new concept was born: "Self-Integration". This however only works with blind children who are well prepared and have a healthy portion of self confidence. The students at the BWB preparatory school receive

intensive training in writing, reading skills in Tibetan, English and Chinese. With this knowledge they are in a position where they have something to offer to other students. They will ask sighted schoolmates to read what is on the blackboard and in return, they provide assistance with English and/or Chinese. Since the students also receive mobility and orientation training with us, they are rather independent. In this way, an equal relationship between sighted and blind pupils develops. Gyendsen delivers most of the required school books in Braille. If a book is not available in Braille, the blind students ask the sighted ones to read the books to them and they write the pages in Braille. 34 blind girls and boys have integrated themselves in regular primary, middle and high schools. A few even jumped some classes. Some were selected by their school mates to become the class representatives. Two blind students performed so well, they even received official awards.

The majority of the self-integration students are very confident, and thereby, like every other child, each one has friends as well as “enemies”. With their directness they sometimes get on the nerves of their teachers, but till date, none of those would like to miss the blind students in their classes.

1.5. A project under the sun

There are only few places on this earth, which are as sunny as the Himalayan plateau where our vocational training farm is based. It is situated on nearly 4000 meters altitude, app 20 kms East of Shigatse, the second largest city in Tibet. From the airplane, the farm, despite minimum precipitation can be recognized as a green oasis in a brown desert landscape. The fields and greenhouses are watered with special drip-line systems – a very environmental friendly way to make sure that all crops receive sufficient water and can resist the strong sunrays. The sun is a very welcomed power. Traditionally it is used to boil water and to heat the courtyards of the houses in winter. Recently also solar companies discovered Tibet. The Chinese solar company Sunrain sent five engineers to Tibet to explore ways to use the sun to the project’s benefit. Last summer the company donated 43 hot water solar systems and 6 shower rooms for children and coworkers. Thanks to this donation as well as the hard and great team work between Sunrain’s technicians and all our colleagues at the farm, even the cows now have access to hot water!

In addition they donated a computer and a mini-bus which is used to transport the students who attend the regular middle and high schools in Shigatse.

1.6 Kiki’s Kindergarten

Thanks to Sunrain’s generous donation, also 18 Kiki Kindergarten students enjoy a regular hot shower. Most experiences open a whole new world for the 3 to 5 year old children: Hot water which falls “from the Sky”, brushing teeth, clean washed clothes, healthy vegetables and fruits. Kiki’s Kindergarten is the first integrative kindergarten in Tibet, perhaps even in China. 18 blind and sighted children live, play and learn together. English, Chinese and even reading and writing in Braille are part of the program, also for the couple of sighted children. The sighted children learn this extremely logical writing system in no time and it provides them with a taste of future reading.

In a national TV interview Kyila formulated the goal of her Kindergarten as follows: "I want these students to become confident, critical alert little thinkers." Actually all she means is that “In her Garten she plants future Kantharis!”.





2. KERALA

2.1. Kantharis across the world (few examples of the Alumnis.)

- Kyila is one the first Kantharis. She was trained in the first year of the international institute for Social Entrepreneurs in several subjects such as management, Public Speech and Fundraising. She fulfilled a longtime dream by realising her kindergarten.
- Yoshimi from Japan, likewise a graduate of the 2009 IISE course, started a mobile library for blind and seeing children in the north of Thailand. ARC, Always Reading Caravan is the name of her project. Till date it already provided its services to over two hundred “book-hungry” children.
- Monicah, Graduate of the 2010 IISE course, successfully fights Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in Kenya.
- Khom Raj Sharma, who runs a computer training center for blind students in Nepal, was interviewed by the Deutsche Welle. (See link below in this newsletter)

2.2 A journey in 5 acts

Also in 2011 our curriculum has developed further. Next to project planning, public speech and Leadership development, it has grown in focusing more on innovation, financial protection and, this time also as part of the course, a close co-operation with local NGOs. The curriculum is built up as a journey in 5 acts. In the first act the participants shift to a fictional developing country. In this country they furnish theoretical social projects. Parallel to this they develop realistic business ideas and realize these within the campus walls. In 2011 "Nabulai", a small fictitious kingdom between "Tansalesia", the fictional country of the first generation and the "Malaika Islands" , the island state of the second generation was the place of action. Nabulai's demography and geography resembles the small South African Kingdom of Swaziland.

In order to have the teams getting familiarized with handling investments, they were asked to realize small businesses. Some interesting ideas took shape: An “event company“organized Karaoke Parties, another group ran a Snackbar and a third group started a Coffee shop. A team even recorded a CD with international folksongs sang by participants from all over the world. "Voices Of IISE" can be downloaded against a donation on the following website: (<http://bwb-iise.org/voices-of-iise/>).

The profit that was made was donated to Alieu Jaiteh's project; Start Now. Parallel to act one, the participants worked on their own projects. Seven projects were submitted to the Swiss BWB Foundation and found worthy of support.

The second act had the theme "CHANGE for A Change". In this act the participants could convert all learned skills into practice. They returned from the fantasy world of Nabulai to the real Kerala and worked in small teams as advisors for local NGOs. The NGO's which were selected all faced certain challenges. Some of them oppose the moral concepts of a conservative society. For example organizations for gays and lesbians, a home for children of prostitutes, an initiative who fights for the integration of HIV AIDS infected people, and a group of environmental advocates who fight against the destruction of a nature reserve. The second act ended with a successful public exhibition.

The third act led the participants to face the real “wild world” by themselves. It consisted of a 8 weeks lasting



internship. Anja, a blind German participant went to Humla, of one of the most remote and poorest areas of Nepal. She joined a project that is being realized by a former IISE graduate (<http://headnepal.org/>). Shihab, an Indian participant, together with a team of a software company (UST global), developed three patents for products, which can benefit visually-impaired.

Lukette, our participant from Thailand travelled to her own country to work with handicapped drug-addicts and Tahreer, a participant from Palestine, who has planned to start a project to support women in Hebron, had chosen to join an organization for women in the remote areas of Tamil Nadu. Unfortunately she discovered that the organization only existed on paper, that the alleged director was a man, and that the wife of this director suffered daily suppression. Without farther ado Tahreer changed the goal of her internship. She helped the woman to gain self confidence and to become more independent.

In the fourth act the participants further developed their own future projects and they prepared their dream speeches. Parallel the participants developed radio plays, with the topic "social change". These radio plays can be downloaded under the following site: <http://www.explorechange.net/dramas>

The fifth act began after the successful graduation week. Act five is the start of the projects of the graduates.

2.3. The third generation

The third IISE generation started in January 2011 with 21 participants from 16 countries. For different reasons, partly personal, partly IISE internal reasons, five participants had to unfortunately prematurely leave the course.

Here a brief overview of the projects of the graduates of 2011:

- Marguerite Woods from the USA (blind); "Solution Evolution", a project which supports afro American women, particularly single mothers, in Baltimore.
- Raja from Tamil Nadu/India; "Dream care children' s centre". His project will furnish a home for neglected children of prisoners.
- Tahreer from Palestine (visually-impaired); "Eternal Flame". Tahreer wants to empower women in Hebron. She wants to open the first Internet cafe for women.
- Marcus from Nigeria; "The Bridge" A training centre to train marginalized youth in Nigeria.
- Nelson from Liberia; "Echo Radio", Nelson wants to provide the handicapped and marginalized in the Liberian society a voice through his radio station Echo Radio.
- Lukette from Thailand (blind). "Ready Steady Jump" Lukette will setup a preparatory primary school for blind children in Laos.
- Muhammed Shihab From Kerala/India (seeing-impaired), "Blind plus" A project which will support visually impaired people in Kerala.
- Femi from Liberia (blind); "Connecting Vision", Femi will work on the self-integration of blind children and students into regular school systems.
- Vygus from Lithuania (seeing-impaired); "Runway", Runway provides orphans with practical daily living skills so they know how to become independent members in society.
- Beatriz from Peru (blind); "Edu Bus-Future on Wheels". A mobile blind school which will provide training to the blind in the remote areas of the Andes.
- Drolma from Tibet/China; "Highway OF Hope" a tea-house meeting place that serves as a networking place for handicapped people in Lhasa.
- Nicholas from Kenya; "One Society for All". Nicholas will develop an alternative school system for blind and disadvantaged pre-school aged children.
- Anja from Germany; "Bats in Action" Anja plans to set up her project in Brazil. She wants to assist the blind to develop and find new job possibilities.

- Keith from Kenya will set up a project to take care of school dropouts by providing them alternative education in filmmaking and other creative vocations.
 - Alieu from the Gambia; "Start now" , a preparing school for blind university candidates.
 - Nosisa from Zimbabwe; "Tula Siswe (Do not cry my country)" To reduce stigma and discrimination towards the HIV/AIDS infected through social integration in the society using the church as a platform.
- All projects received a start up donation of 1000 euros. This was generously donated by the Dutch organization "Remarkable". Seven participants had applied for funding to the Swiss BWB foundation and received further funds to start up their projects.

2.4 The first Indian Award:

INCITE, the International Centre for Intellectual Training & Empowerment, awarded the IISE the "Incite - Excellence Award in Social Entrepreneurship" in May 2011. One of the board members of Incite is Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, former president of India. The laudatory speech was held by Mr Shashi Tharoor, former under Secretary of the UN. This would not have been possible with the great work of the entire IISE staff.

2.5 Media

- Deutsche Welle: <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,15337145,00.html>
<http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,6608030,00.html>
<http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,5420488,00.html>

China Daily www.braillewithoutborders.org/ENGLISH/CHINA_DAILY_EUROPE.pdf

BWB-IISE Facebook: [HTTP://www.facebook.com/bwbiise](http://www.facebook.com/bwbiise)

*We want to say **THANK YOU** very much for your interest in as well as your support to the Braille Without Borders projects.*

We would very much appreciate it if you can pass this annual report on to anyone who is interested.

With warmest regards,

*Sabriye Tenberken
Paul Kronenberg*

Support:

If you would like to support the activities of Braille Without Borders and Kanthari, please make a donation to the Friends of BWB Foundation in the USA or look on the following website: <http://www.braillewithoutborders.org/ENGLISH/support.html>

<p>Friends of Braille Without Borders Foundation Contact Person: Ed Weihenmayer Address: 619 Ocean Club Court, Amelia Island FL 32034 Country: USA (Complies with 501 (c) (3) law) E-mail: ed@touchthetop.com Founded: 2008/ Boardmembers: Chairman: Mr. Erik Weihenmayer Secretary: Mr. Mark Byrne Treasurer: Mr. Ed Weihenmayer/ Bank: Wachovia Bank Account holder: Friends of Braille Without Borders Address: 1860 S. 8th Street Fernandina Beach FL 32034 USA</p>	<p>Account: Friends of Braille Without Borders Account Number: 2000037451183 Routing Number: 063000021 Swift Code: PNBUS33 Alternatively you can also send a cheque to: Friends of Braille Without Borders Foundation Address: c/o Ed Weihenmayer 619 Ocean Club Court, Amelia Island, FL32034 USA Please mention your e-mail address on the cheque as well. Thank you. (Complies with 501 (c) (3) law)</p>
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