



XRCVC

2022-2023

Stories of our successes

at the Xavier's Resource Centre for the
Visually Challenged

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XRCVC: A Spotlight on some success stories in 2022-2023

Introduction

The lives of persons with disabilities are full of challenges due to strenuous social situations and lack of overall accessibility of the environment. This curtails their inclusion in the mainstream society and could result in isolation. However, the situation could be altered through timely interventions and actions. Some organisations have been doing this through various strategies. The Xavier's Resource Centre for the Visually Challenged (XRCVC) is one such organisation.

The XRCVC has been working in the areas of inclusive education, accessible and inclusive environment, advocacy and awareness for the past 20 years. In the last year, the centre has worked with various stakeholder in these areas and have achieved good success. Following is a spotlight of some of the XRCVC's successful case studies.

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Inclusive Education and Trainings for Persons with Disabilities, Educator Training and Training in Accessible Content Creation

In the area of inclusive education, the centre worked with students with disabilities, educators – both general and special through training them in strategies in class inclusion and training student volunteers from the college in the creation of accessible content. This has attained good success as is evident from the following case studies:

Case Study 1: Savit Sodani – a transformed life

XRCVC has always encouraged inclusive education as it believes that growth of children with disabilities can be best achieved if they are educated alongside their peers without disabilities. This can yield amazing results, as is evident from the following:



Savit Sodani, a visually impaired ICSE student who we have been mentoring since he was in Class 2, scored a staggering 97.6 per cent in his Class 10 Board Exams. Savit is a student of Prime Academy (ICSE). The principal of the school, Rehana Kazi, was delighted to share, “XRCVC guides and supports us throughout the academic year. Not only help in academics, but also guidance on how to handle the visually challenged children emotionally, socially, in the classroom, outside the classroom and on the sports field. Training sessions for all the teachers are conducted, and new teachers are trained as they join.”

Savit was in fact, helped in non-academic social aspects as well, and today comes across as a fully confident teenager ready to face life’s challenges.

As Sheetal Sodani, mother of Savit says, “I was worried for my child. I wanted him to be on par with his twin brother, which was not happening in the initial stages. It was only after we approached the centre, did things start to change for the better.” She glowingly mentioned about Savit’s continuous process, both academically and socially. “Even when we faced problems with Savit’s adjustment with other children in the society, the centre helped us and today, Savit is one of the most popular persons in the society.”



“The centre has the power to change the lives of the blind,” says Savit. He further adds, “Mathematics was like Mount Everest, that I could conquer successfully only because of the centre’s help. It was through the efforts of the XRCVC team that I could participate in sports in my school and play like other sighted friends.” The centre also trained Savit’s school teachers in methods of planning lessons and even convinced the school to allow Savit to appear in his exams using computers instead of scribes.

Thus, this was a truly transformative case, where the centre’s intervention has gone a long way in changing the life of a student who was barely able to perform in his class to someone who excelled at the ICSE.

Case Study 2: Level 1 Inclusive Education

The Right to Education Act (RTE) 2009, the Rights to Persons with Disabilities Act (RPwD) 2016, and the United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006(UNCRPD) as ratified by India all guarantee equal rights and access to study for students with disabilities.

While Inclusive Education has become a legal mandate in India, the ground level resources in schools across the country are far from equipped to meet the need. School managements have become aware of the legal implications of denying admissions to blind and low vision students. Despite the same, the management often feels at a loss in being ill-equipped to process the admission in the absence of in-house experts or availability of external support.



One such case was that of **Vivaan Shrirao**, a 6-year-old student studying at Aarose International School at Ulwe, Navi Mumbai. When his father saw an advertisement with details of an XRCVC program, he was extremely eager to have Vivaan join the program and confirmed his attendance immediately. The parents then met the centre as part of the selection process, where they shared that Vivaan, though admitted and studying in a mainstream school, has not been participating in all activities like his peers. He studies by reciting orally with help from his teacher/mother, who read aloud to him. Vivaan, being an extremely curious learner with interest in General Knowledge and Sciences, didn’t read Braille and didn’t seem to have a lot of tactile exposure to his surroundings.



Bhargav Patil is another student with blindness studying in grade 3 at Balvisha English Medium school at a village in Jalgaon. He too struggled to find a school willing to admit him. With all credit to efforts made by his parents, he had begun learning Braille, but had no opportunities to read or write Braille to maintain the skill. His parents had heard of the XRCVC's program through various parent groups and were so keen to enrol that they found temporary accommodation in Mumbai for the duration of the course.

The centre's level I proposed to be a one stop destination for students with visual impairments studying in mainstream schools. The program aims to equip students with:

- Necessary special skills to function independently in their educational classes
- Accessible resources when needed (textbooks, class notes, etc.)

This support was open to blind and low vision students between Nursery and Grade 3, as well as to students above Grade 3 who feel that they have not yet gained these skills.

The programme that ranged for full days from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. during April to June 2022: Special Skill Training (Day-long Sessions) covered courses in various Special Skills as well as hands-on visual concept enrichment for key concepts in the curriculum up to Grade 3 level; and will also get students prepared to take up the next level of training that the XRCVC offers for middle and high school levels.

Students were also enthusiastic to take up the next level of training that the XRCVC offers for middle and high school level.

Ongoing Support and Follow-up Sessions (at least once a month) continued from July 2022 - May 2023. These were held on a monthly basis for one academic year following the full-day training.

Vivaan's parents shared how much he anticipates sessions. He too, has now begun to advocate for himself to his teachers in school to include him for yoga exercises, to have a screen reader installed onto a computer unit in the computer lab, etc.

Bhargav's parents shared how he had never before interacted with other peers with blindness and being encouraged to participate through various activities, has also improved his social skills.

Vivaan's parents and he himself shared that they have "learnt skills for a lifetime".

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Case Study 3: Lab Skills for Level 4 and Dhruv Patil - SYJC, Science



XRCVC believes in inclusive education for students with disabilities. The level-wise inclusive education training is one of the key activities at XRCVC. The training aims to train students with blindness with age-appropriate core skills to participate optimally in the mainstream classroom. Level 4 is the graduating batch of school students studying 8th and 9th grades. The centre started working with them in 2017 as part of their inclusive education program. Lab skills are conducted when students enter 8th and 9th grade—when laboratory and science experiments start as part of their curriculum. Dhruv is an SYJC student; FYJC was online. Hence, there was no laboratory work for students.

As the new offline year started, Dhruv and his teachers shared their struggles and challenges faced during the laboratory period. How to work in Chemistry, Physics, and Geology labs? Hence, the laboratory sessions for level 4 students and Dhruv were combined.

The two full-day lab skills training focused on working in a science laboratory setup without sight and using other senses while performing various science apparatus, experiments, and basic skills required to work in a laboratory. Dhruv has since then started working in the laboratory with minimal sighted assistant help.

His case study is continued in his own words:

“Thank you for the wonderful training of the lab skills! It helped me to understand how sighted people do reactions of various elements in the chemistry lab itself!

Now I can do my practical independently and without any hesitation!

At first my professors were not allowing me to do the practicals on my own, but after my training I was able to convince them!

I learn various types of experiments with it!

I find chemistry very interesting now that I can do various experiments!”

Case Study 4: Orientation and Mobility

Orientation and Mobility (O&M) is a critical area for students with visual impairments as it is essential for the student to learn to move safely and efficiently and as independently as possible through all environments.

The COVID-19 pandemic, followed by a nationwide emergency lockdown to slow the unprecedented spread of the virus, had a serious impact on people living with visual disabilities and even endangered their lives in the



long run. Given, people living with visual disabilities (low vision and blindness) were more likely susceptible to get infected by the SARS-CoV 2 than people without visual disabilities, many restrictive and control measures, including the adoption of new behavioural changes (for example, social distance during outdoor movement, limiting touch or tactile contact) recommended by the government posed immense challenges to individuals with visual impairments.

Since a face-to-face interaction between service providers (trainers/instructors) and visually impaired persons or their family members was not possible during the lockdown, information centric training programs were conducted through either tele-conference and videoconferencing methods. An orientation and mobility program however, is a skill that cannot be taught in an online-mode.

The Orientation and Mobility program at the XRCVC is offered to high school or college students, and adults with blindness or low vision; and covers knowledge and skills in the following areas:

- Sensory development, or maximizing all of your senses to help you know where you are and where you want to go.
- Using your senses in combination with self-protective techniques and human guide techniques to move safely through indoor and outdoor environments.
- Using a cane and other devices to walk safely and efficiently.
- Soliciting and/or declining assistance.
- Finding destinations with strategies that include following directions and using landmarks and compass directions.
- Techniques for crossing streets, such as analysing and identifying intersections and traffic patterns.
- Problem-solving skills to determine what to do if you are disoriented or lost or need to change your route.
- Using public transportation and transit systems. Participants of this program were conveyed the key expectations of the training prior to sign up.

To make up for the long backlog of requests, the XRCVC planned a series of Orientation and Mobility trainings.



Angad Singh, a student who had just appeared for his Class 12th board exams and attended the first batch after the lockdown, “I want to learn mobility because I need it to be independent.”

We continue his case study in his own words:

"My experience of the course was truly great, I think I became more confident after that. My main aim was to start travelling independently. Before the course I used to think that's impossible for me but no it's not. One



more thing which I liked the best is the topics were covered in utmost detail and there was no scope of doubts too. I truly enjoyed the games part, too.

Thank you to you (Shizanne D'mello) and Calveena miss for teaching this course to me, this really means a lot."

Case Study 5: Nilima Sagavekar



She is teacher in Ratnagiri. She is a person with late blindness. After getting blind, for her, the main challenge was moving around independently. She came to know about SmartCane. The centre assessed her and provided the training of SmartCane. The training was conducted practically in the college by forming obstacles such as opening windows, staircases, etc. The XRCVC showed her different vibration patterns when obstacles come and how to find the way.

Her case study is continued in her own words:

"I am Nilima Sagavekar, and I am teacher by profession. Few years ago, I have lost my vision due to RP. Initially, I was in depression so many questions were in my mind that how can I complete my work or how can I travel because dependency is the worst feeling. Even in my home also I was striking everywhere. I could not travel in my neighbourhood also but 6 months ago I heard about your device smart cane it's really beneficial to me. Now I can travel in my neighbourhood and also, I don't strike here and there, Now I am really feeling good after having training from you about utilisation of this device. Thank you so much for your co-operation and support and also for the training of such wonderful device."

Case Study 6: Namira Shaikh



She learned about the XRCVC from Dr. Ajay Dudhani an ophthalmic surgeon. She was losing sight, so the doctor referred her to the centre. When she visited, the XRCVC conducted an assessment, and her needs were



identified. She was holding the phone very close to her eyes. This resulted in discomfort and pain. She was not able to read the printed book. The centre showed her a hand-held video magnifier, but still it was not comfortable. The centre told her that she could learn a screen reader, which will help her read the content from the screen aloud. Later she joined the XRCVC's android training batch, where she was taught the mobile screen reader usage. The XRCVC taught basic gestures when the screen reader is on, and showed different gestures. The training was a practical session that she had to do independently. After the training, she learned how to find the app, go to the next screen, scroll, etc. She was also taught the usage of some apps. After the session, she was using the phone independently more confidently. Using the screen reader, she could do her work more effectively and didn't need to strain her eyes. The centre had also asked her to learn a computer screen reader that would benefit her while conducting tuitions. We continue her case study in her own words:

"I am here by the reference of Dr. Ajay Dudhani Sir, I am differently abled person diagnosed with hetro-macular-degeneration & also certified with 40% of lower vision. I had completed my graduation before two year's & from last two years giving tuitions at home. I had attended one of your workshops based on using Android applications. I didn't know the hidden features of an android application your team-mate also let me know about some apps which is helpful for me in reading, listening & also in teaching apps like look out.

Once again thank you so much, to you & your team-mates who help me out in doing my day -to-day activities by my own."

Case Study 7: Aditya Pandey



He is a blind person and has self-learned the mobile screen reader. He joined the XRCVC's mobile training to learn more and use the screen reader effectively. From the session, he learned various things.

We continue his case study in his own words:

"Few months ago, I have joined XRCVC series of mobile trainings which had taught basic Android usage to us. before the mobile training happened, I was facing many difficulties to use my mobile phone but giving the mobile training you have shown how to navigate explorer the applications and the TalkBack itself that help me and now my phone usage is flawless my dearest regards to XRCVC for organising this training thank you."

Case Study 8: Rushikesh Kamble



Rushikesh Kamble is a 20-year-old student of St. Xavier's College, Mumbai. He has come from a deprived background but holds high aspirations for his future career. He is a visually impaired student and wants to make a good mark for himself.

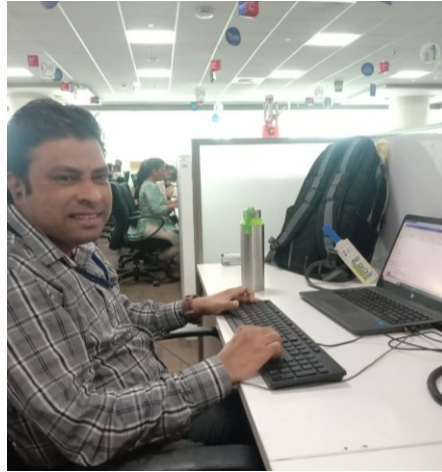
As he was nearing the end of his academic career in the college, he was looking forward to undergoing a Master's program in Human Resource Management and Labour Relations from Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. For this purpose, he had applied there and he was required to appear for an entrance test. Suddenly, he received a communication from the TISS stating that he will have to produce a fresh disability certificated signed by a civil surgeon in a proforma provided by them. He was shocked as it would have been impossible for him to acquire such a document within the time available at his disposal. He had attached the disability certificate issued by the competent authority under the law as designated by the Government of India.

He communicated with the TISS but to no avail. He approached the centre to see if it could assist him in the matter. The XRCVC then approached the examination department of the TISS and after some communication, the centre could resolve the matter successfully in his favour. He could appear for his test on the given date and time with a scribe.

He states, "When TISS authority had asked me to get my scribe application form signed by a civil surgeon it was very difficult for me because I did not know the exact location of the government hospital so it was difficult for me to go get it signed. But with the help of XRCVC the issue was resolved in a short period of time. So, I am thankful to the XRCVC."

Case Study 9: Light at the end of the Tunnel for Mr. Pratap Shirke and Ms. Pradnya Nikam.

a) Mr. Pratap Dattaram Shirke



Mr. Pratap Dattaram Shirke, a 41-year-old B.com graduate, has been employed by Tata Capital Financial Services Limited since September 2009 in the position of Assistant Manager in the Personal Loan division. He used to manage the central MIS team and the pre-approval procedure.

He was the sole bread winner supporting his wife and two school going daughters.

Much to his and his family's dismay he found that his vision was suddenly deteriorating. He was diagnosed with diabetic retinopathy in July 2021. He was informed that his eyesight would not be restored despite seeing numerous doctors. He was shocked by this, and it had an effect on both his personal and professional lives. Initially he could not mentally accept this situation. Matters soon deteriorated and he was asked to proceed on unpaid sabbatical.

One of the XRCVC ex-student who is totally blind himself persuaded Mr. Shirke to contact the XRCVC. In addition, the organisation's CSR wing who had previously partnered with the XRCVC contacted the centre and requested support, training and intervention.

Mr. Shirke was assessed at the XRCVC for his condition. A dual strategy for his rehabilitation involving assistive technology training on the one hand and Orientation and Mobility training on the other, was chalked out for him. These trainings started in August 2022 and ended in January 2023 saw Mr. Shirke diving headlong into acquiring new skills and competencies at the computer and mobile phone as also learning the effective use of the white cane in assisting him to travel independently. He grew in proficiency and confidence. The XRCVC courses he took were very useful and effective for him.

On February 20, 2023, Tata Capital rehired him as an assistant manager in the quality section for their central operations. He has spent a month in his present department and has no trouble working or comprehending the system and functioning efficiently.

Presented below are his comments followed by a word from an official within the company about this transformation.

Pratap Shirke: "I re-joined Tata capital financial services limited in central operation team from 20th Feb 2023. Thank you to all XRCVC team for support in my critical time.

Need your support in future also. Thanks to Ashwini sir and Kamlesh sir for supporting me in my critical time from Tata capital financial services limited.



Thanks to Vikas sir, Keshav sir and Shizanne madam for giving confidence.

Thanks to all again team.

Thanks, and regards

Pratap shirke”

Ashwin Naidu: “As discussed, due to your sustained training, effort and discipline, Mr. Pratap Shirke has been re-inducted with Tata Capital, and he is back to his earlier role.

We are so grateful to XRCVC, for taking up our request and took Pratap under their wings, trained him and treated him appropriately and have given an opportunity to prove himself again.

Thank you so much for your kindness.

With warm regards,

Ashwin Naidu

Corporate Sustainability

Tata Capital Financial Services Limited”

b) Ms. Pradnya Nikam

Pradnya Nikam had shifted to the UK after her marriage in 2014. In 2017, she contracted meningitis and lost her vision and she got separated from her husband. On coming back to India, she found out about the XRCVC and received computer training from the centre and is now placed with TCS as an IT Analyst in Pune.



Creating Accessible Environment

Accessibility is the corner stone of any work that is done in the disability space. Unless there exists a barrier-free and accessible environment, it will be difficult to achieve any tangible results for the empowerment of persons with disabilities. XRCVC has always been working to make environments accessible for persons with disabilities, to allow them to achieve their potentials to the fullest.

Case Study 10: Banking on Accessibility



Since 2006, the XRCVC has been actively involved in promoting banking and financial access through its advocacy initiatives. A number of RBI rules have followed its active social advocacy work. Accessible ATMs too have been launched, thanks to its tireless work. In addition, the XRCVC had actively engaged with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Indian Banks Association (IBA) in helping draft procedural guidelines for bank customers with disabilities as also standards for accessible ATM's etc.

In the recent past, especially the last few years, it has been noticed that a number of persons with disabilities were facing discrimination when it came to banking access as also major challenges with regards web accessibility and digital transaction.

In order that these problems be effectively address, the XRCVC actively worked on compiling a resource by way of its report title Banking on Accessibility – A case for accessible banking for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs). This was compiled through the months of April to June 22 and was issued in the last week of June as part of the Project Inclusion and Access – The 360-degree approach. Available at <http://www.xrcvc.org/docs/Banking%20on%20Accessibility%20by%20XRCVC%20June%202022.pdf>. In order to help highlight the issues, the XRCVC has been in touch with the office of RBI Deputy Governor Shri M. Rajeshwar



Rao. In addition to being shared with the RBI, it was also shared with some banking officials both in the public and private sector.

Case Study 11: Banking problem Resolved: Sanjay L Prasad



XRCVC has believed in financial inclusion of visually challenged people and has worked to that end. Ever since 2006, several initiatives have been taken in this regard, latest being the publication of a detailed report on banking accessibility. We have helped several people in getting access to various financial services.

A case in point is that of Mr. Sanjay L Prasad who had taken a home loan of 4.7 lakh from HDFC Ltd. He wanted to retire his loan prematurely and to that end he requested for a facility to make online payment of the remainder of the loan amount which was declined by HDFC on the ground of such facility being not available for foreclosure of the loan. This was despite the fact that Mr. Prasad had informed them while seeking loan that he was blind and did not possess a cheque book. He was allowed to pay his EMIs electronically back then.

In spite of persistent efforts, HDFC did not relent and offer him the facility of online payment for foreclosure of his loans. He approached the XRCVC, and the center could convince HDFC to offer him the facility and now he has been able to satisfactorily foreclose his loan.

In his own words: “On 5th of November I visited HDFC Mira road branch for closure of my housing loan they outrightly rejected my loan closure offer by quoting their own created rule which has nothing to do with RBI guidelines...As I did not hear from them, I sent another reminder mail on 13th November. During this period, based on my past experience, I decided to approach XRCVC...I sent a mail to Mr. Sam explaining the problem of loan prepayment. Within hours, I received a call from the center seeking some clarifications to pursue the matter with higher authorities of HDFC Ltd. Finally, they forced HDFC to modify their rules and allowed me to make online payment. Ultimately issue was resolved on 25th Nov from their end...Thanks to XRCVC for their efforts in getting my loan cleared. We need such organizations to counter ignorance on the part of both private and public organizations.”

Case Study 12: Accessible Canteen Menu – Varun Kumar



On 10th December 2022 a unique service was launched with the active involvement of the XRCVC and the student inclusion cell at St. Xavier's college, Mumbai where the canteen menu of the college was made available in an accessible format. A QR code was generated which enabled all to go to a website where they could view the menu. This menu is strategically placed at various places in the college premises for wider knowledge and usage. The service was launched by Rector Fr. Keith Dsouza and the principal Dr. Rajendra Shinde.

This idea was initially conceived by the student's inclusion cell which is mentored by the XRCVC. For a long time it could not be brought to fruition but a visually impaired student of TYBSc(IT) Varun Manoj Kumar worked on it under the suggestion and supervision of the XRCVC. Eventually this idea became a reality. Varun narrates how he worked upon the idea:

His case study is continued in his own words:

"I was given an assignment in my BSc(IT) course and was wondering what to do which could have long term impact. I have been a student of this college for a long time and often visit canteen. Most times it is crowded and the personnel there have hardly any time to describe the items. I thought why can't we have menu in accessible format? I was talking to other VI friends and decided to undertake this as a project on the suggestion of the XRCVC."

Varun further states that although he has been thinking of this, he had lot of difficulties both in terms of codification and logistics. He profusely thanks XRCVC for helping him and standing by him throughout this process. He says, that "had it not been for the centers guidance and assistance this would have not been possible".

Two students (Ajay Kharb and Shreyas More) who are visually impaired are thrilled with this innovation and service provision. They stated that this would lead to their independence and reduce the time required in the whole process beside making the whole experience of ordering less cumbersome.

Thus, the XRCVC took one more step in enhancing the independence of visually impaired students on campus. This also led to awareness amongst the other students about the accessibility requirements of these students.

<https://canteen.xaviers.edu/about>



Awareness and Advocacy

The Centre worked relentlessly for creating awareness in society about the lives of persons with disabilities and advocating their rights. Some of the success stories under this last year include:

Case Study 13: Purple Fest: A unique experience.

The Purple Fest was a first-of-its-kind inclusive festival in India that embraced and celebrated persons with disabilities. It aimed to showcase how we could come together to create a welcoming and inclusive world for everyone, and was organised on January 6, 7, 8 2023 by the State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities, Goa in association with the Directorate of Social Welfare, Entertainment Society of Goa, Goa Tourism Development Corporation and Information & Publicity Department, Govt. of Goa. This festival was mentioned glowingly by our honorable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji in a monthly radio programme naming “Maan ki baat”. It was a pleasure and honour for the Xavier’s Resource Centre for the Visually Challenged (XRCVC) to be invited for such a prestigious event. It was an enriching experience for the team and also brought forth quite a lot of learning. This festival provided an opportunity to showcase a wide array of Assistive Technology used by people with various disabilities.

An exhibition of Assistive Technology was organised to provide a window into the way people with disabilities live their day-to-day life. The technology ranged from gadgets used for independent living, health, finance, to highly sophisticated technology used for STEM Education by the Visually Challenged.

1. How persons with blindness and low vision use computers, conduct scientific experiments, play sports and live a holistic life.
2. How persons with locomotor disability can use a motorized stair-climbing chair.
3. How persons with disability in the upper limbs can control a computer using their eyeballs.
4. How deaf and hard of hearing persons use today’s technology to conduct seamless communication.
5. How persons with disability can function independently and more efficiently using modern smart technology.”

The Chief Minister of Goa Dr. Promod Sawant cut the ribbon at the experience zone. Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment government of India and Goa’s Social Welfare Minister also visited the experience zone. The XRCVC were also visited by Shri Rajesh Agarwal, Secretary, Department of Disability Empowerment, Government of India who was highly impressed by the variety of technology that was on display.

Shri Sashi Bhushan – SBI foundation also visited the centre’s exhibition and was shown the technology and given detailed information about the various usage cases of the technology.

We also had a simulation-based awareness session called Antarchakshu (The Eye Within). We conducted 15 sessions during the festival days.

Over 500 people ranging from top Goa Civil service officers to police personnel to bankers and doctors experienced the event and were highly impressed as is evident from the feedback given by them;

“Very informative and advanced knowledge sharing.” - Deepali Naik, Director Women and Child Development, Panaji Goa

“With open eyes sometimes, we fail to recognise things. This session gave us a lot of realisation.” - Datta K. Sawant, police inspector, Calangute Police Station



“Good insight was provided into how a disabled person lives with pride and grace.” - Dr. Pooja Madkaiker

“Nice, well-planned awareness program. It helped us develop empathy and more strength towards life.” - Gauresh P.

“Excellent, should introduce such workshops in school, colleges, make short video and circulate on social media platforms” said Mr. Sunil Gudiar, a participant.

“The session was very interactive, making us feel the actual difficulty faced in their day-to-day life (awareness was good)” said Ms. Anushka Pai, another participant.

Mr. Taha I. Haaziq, Secretary, O/o State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities, Goa had glowing words to say for the XRCVC’s participation in the Purple Fest. His message was very vocal in the appreciation of the contribution:

“Dear XRCVC Team,

We were able to pull this mega event and make it a memorable experience for all participants and delegates only because of your sincere contribution and support.

We are obliged to inform you that the impact of ... Assistive Technology Awareness Exhibition was a grand success; there were more than 500 participants from the category of Goa Civil Service, Doctors, B.Ed. students, Member of Legislative Assembly, Bankers, CRPs & BRPs, etc. These created a huge impact in sensitizing these groups towards Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities. Many participants appreciated this and shared that it was a worth experience in participating at ... Assistive Technology Awareness Exhibition which helped in breaking lots of myths what we carry. This experience zone was an integral part to make Purple Fest, Goa a grand success. Further, we are extremely happy to share and celebrate this fest along with our Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri. Narendra Modi's mention of this mega event in his 'Maan Ki Baat'.”

Dr. Sam Taraporevala, Executive director XRCVC said, our team was highly excited to participate in the Purple Fest and collaborated with the Commissioner for persons with disabilities in Goa. The opportunity to present the Assistive Technology Exhibition was a great step forward in creating an inclusive society and a world that welcomes people with disabilities without any inhibitions.



Photographs:

Assistive Technology:



Dr Pramod Sawant, Honorable Chief Minister of Goa cutting a ribbon to the Exhibition Zone in the presence of Shri. Subhash Phal Desai, Minister of Social Welfare, Government of Goa; Virendra Kumar, Union Cabinet Minister for Social Justice & Empowerment, and other dignitaries.



Dr Pramod Sawant, Honorable Chief Minister of Goa, along with Shri. Subhash Phal Desai, Minister of Social Welfare, Government of Goa; Virendra Kumar, Union Cabinet Minister for Social Justice & Empowerment, and other dignitaries at the Assistive Technology Exhibition zone exploring Inclusive STEM Education options.



Officials from the Goa Civil Services at the Exhibition zone, watching a demonstration of accessible Smart Home and Independent Living aids at the Assistive Technology Exhibition zone.



Participants at the Assistive Technology Exhibition zone watching demonstrations of screen readers and magnifiers as workplace solutions.



Participants at the Assistive Technology Exhibition zone watching demonstrations of accessible aids for inclusive STEM education for persons with disabilities

Case Study 14: Antarchakshu® travels to village schools in Maharashtra

“Tai (sister), how do you use a touchscreen phone,” asked an incredulous Asmita Thokade, a Std. 10 student of Jijamata Kanya Vidyalaya, Darwaha. Dhanashri, to whom the question had been addressed, switched on the talkback feature on her phone and demonstrated to Asmita and her classmates how visually impaired persons use touchscreen phones.

In January 2023, the Xavier’s Resource Centre for the Visually Challenged (XRCVC) was invited by two rural schools near Amravati (Maharashtra) to conduct Antarchakshu® awareness and sensitisation workshops for their Std 10 and Std 12 students. These workshops were conducted with the support provided by the SBI Foundation.

While Antarchakshu® audiences in the past have been largely urban, this was a unique opportunity for the XRCVC to showcase its flagship awareness event on the lives of persons with disabilities in a very different setting.



Dhanashri Gawande and Krishna Warriar conducting Antarchakshu® workshops in Jijamata Kanya Vidyalaya (Darwaha) and Swatantra Veer Savarkar Vidyalaya (Bhulai) in January 2023

The resource persons for the workshops were Krishna Warriar and Dhanashri Gawande, and the sessions were conducted in a mix of Marathi and Hindi to suit the preference of the participants.

Dhanashri, who was born in Both village in Yavatmal district, struck an instant chord with the students of both schools – Jijamata Kanya Vidyalaya, Darwaha and Swatantrya Veer Savarkar Vidyalaya, Bhulai.

In the initial part of each of the four workshops, the participants were blindfolded and made to experience a disability simulation, after which they were requested to open their blindfolds and share their experiences with each other and the resource persons.

Once the students overcame their initial hesitation, the sessions became extremely interactive, as the questions came thick and fast:

- Is there a cure for blindness?
- Do all blind people go through a similar experience?
- Does colour matter to a blind person?
- How do you travel independently?
- Do you dream?
- Do disabled persons have a sixth sense?



- What is your concept of beauty?

Dhanashri patiently answered each question, making sure that every myth or stereotype in the minds of the participants about the lives of persons of disabilities was dispelled. “I felt very good, especially during the interaction. Spreading awareness in rural areas is crucial as these students do not get any kind of exposure regarding disability,” she said.

“Before this workshop, I did not think seriously about disability and such people,” confessed Shradha Pardhi, a Std 12 student from Swatantra Veer Savarkar Vidyalaya, Bhulai. “I had a lot of negative thoughts about persons with disabilities. But now I know that they too can achieve their dreams if they believe in themselves. The session was a good and new learning experience.”

Ms Mamta Narwade, the principal of Savarkar Vidyalaya, was delighted that her students got to participate in this unique event. “I felt very happy as I got an opportunity to organise these sessions for my students. I am sure it will be helpful for them for their future because sensitisation and awareness regarding marginalised classes is very important for students. I would like to thank the XRCVC team for conducting workshops in my school,” she said.

At which Dhanashri promptly pulled out her touchscreen phone and sent Ms Narwade a Whatsapp emoji in reply!

Case Study 15: A state of the Art Hub for assistive technology – Hindustan Unilever (HUL)

The centre is regarded as a unique place where a majority of assistive technology for a variety of disabilities is available under one roof. It has been the XRCVC’s endeavour to share knowhow and technological expertise.

Many a times centre has worked in an advisory capacity and has demonstrated the technologies at various places such as corporates, educational institutions, exhibitions, etc.

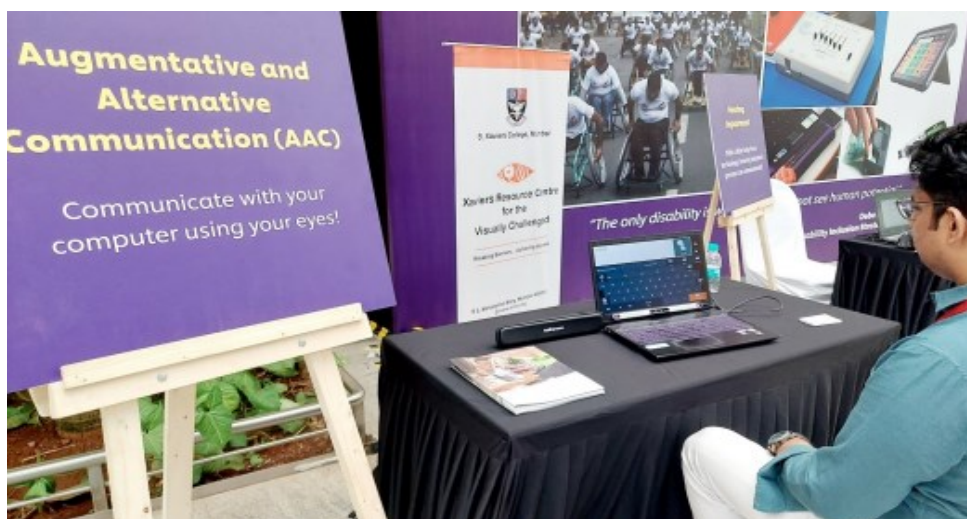




XRCVC team demonstrating the assistive technology at HUL head office, Mumbai



Demonstration of a stair climber wheelchair



Demonstration of a TOBII device which is used by a locomotor disability.

One such demonstration was organised at the Mumbai office of Hindustan Unilever on 7th December 2022. The XRCVC exhibited assistive technology for a variety of disabilities. These include inter alia, screen reading software for computers, accessible smartphones, machines such as blood pressure monitor, talking thermometer, personal and accessible personal weighing scale, accessible bathroom scale, talking oximeter. The centre also demonstrated mobility aids such as stair climbing motorized wheel chair, SmartCane, Tobii the eye tracker and so many other software and hardwares. This demonstration focused on disabilities including blindness and low vision, hearing impairment, loco motor disabilities and specific learning disabilities enable the disabled to easily perform their tasks and move about independently.

Hindustan Unilever has taken an initiative to hire the disabled as interns and employees as part of their diversity and inclusion mandate. Quite a few of the technological gadgets were displayed and 176 employees visited the exhibition and took interests in the technology. Quite a few of these were from middle level management and were looking at the technology from the view point of how it would make the job of their disabled workforce more productive.



The XRCVC team at the Hindustan Unilever head office for the assistive technology exhibition

Few feedbacks of the visitors are mentioned below:

“We saw and tried out all the devices for our teammates (visually disabled) and felt that they can be used for their s operational activities and can really help them/feel them m not different” says, Nikhil Byshut.

Such exhibitions conducted by the centre have proved extremely useful as a guide to assistive technology since most people are unaware of them.

“Fabulous experience for me to get to experience new tech that makes work fun and accessible for all” says, Tanvi Shah.

Centre has been actively looking at opportunities to work with a variety of organizations to spread awareness of assistive technologies with the eventual aim of getting more and more disabled placed in productive employment.

Testimonials

Dear Sir

It gives us great pleasure to inform that Union Bank of India has launched accessible debit card product named as 'Union Sparsh' on 11-11-2022 on bank's foundation day during a grand function held in Mumbai. The event happened in the gathering of more than 6000 attendees including bank customers, staff and invitees.

Bank unveiled Union Sparsh as a soft launch. Bank will soon issue this accessible variant of the debit card to visually impaired customers once they are mass produce by the vendor. Union Sparsh is having two key accessibility features Braille letter U and rounded notch.

We would like to express gratitude for your support and feedback in conceptualizing this accessible card solution. We will keep you updated on the further progress.

Sincere thanks for your invaluable help.

Thanks and regards,

Team Union Access

DIT, CO

“Respected Dr Sam and team XRCVC and Mr. Aadhar,

I wanted to take a moment to express my sincere gratitude for the workshop on app testing of Audi Vision and training that you recently conducted. Your expertise and knowledge in this area was truly remarkable, and the insights that you shared were both insightful and practical.

I am especially grateful for the hands-on approach that you took in the workshop, which allowed me and other participants to gain valuable experience in app testing and hone our skills. This will undoubtedly be of great benefit in my future endeavors in this field.

I also appreciate the time and effort that you put into organizing and conducting the workshop. It was clear that you had a deep commitment to helping others learn and succeed, and your dedication to this cause is truly inspiring.

Once again, I would like to thank Team XRCVC and Mr. Aadhar for their invaluable contributions and for sharing their knowledge with us. It was an honor and a privilege to participate in the workshop, and I look forward to applying the skills and insights that I gained in my future work.

Sincerely,

Team CoE, SBI Foundation”



Media Coverage

Our work has received extensive media coverage during the past year. This obviously demonstrates that the work has been noticed and has been extensively recognised. The following table gives details of the same:

Sr. no.	Media Coverage; Link	Date of Publication
1	The XRCVC's work was highlighted by the Free Press Journal as being highly significant.	Published on 29 th Jul, 2022 in the Free Press Journals (FPJ) Angel's edition.
2	Talking oximeter, smart gloves, vibrating device for dyslexia on display at exhibition of assistive technologies	Published on 8 th Oct, 2022 in the Hindustan Times.
3	TPCDT hosts new age tech expo for people with disabilities	Published on 12 th Oct, 2022 in ETHealthworld.com by The Economics Times.
4	Tata Power Community Development Trust curates expo showcasing New Age Tech Solutions	Published on 12 th Oct, 2022 in Dealmoney.
5	दिव्यांगजनों को सशक्त बनाएगी टाटा पावर	Published on 27 th Oct, 2022 in The CSR Journal
6	Enabling the differently abled	Published on 12 th Nov, 2022 in The Signal. The XRCVC's work on banking access was highlighted in The Intersection by The Signal, an online publication.
7	Akasa Air introduces in-flight safety manual in Braille for the visually impaired passengers	Published on 4 th Jan, 2023 in the Times of India.
8	Akasa Air Introduces Braille In-Flight Safety Manual	Published on 4 th Jan, 2023 in the Mobility Outlook Bureau.
9	Akasa Air introduces in-flight safety manual in Braille for the blind	Published on 5 th Jan, 2023 in the Pioneer.
10	Akasa Air's In-Flight Safety Manual Is Now Available In Braille	Published on 5 th Jan, 2023 in the Simple Flying.
11	Akasa Air introduces in-flight safety manual in Braille for visual impaired	Published on 4 th Jan, 2023 in the Lokmat Times and IANS.
12	Akasa Air introduces in-flight safety manual in Braille for visual impaired	Published on 4 th Jan, 2023 in the Investing.com.
13	Akasa Air makes journey SAFER for visually-impaired flyers, introduces BRAILLE in-flight safety manual	Published on 5 th Jan, 2023 in Zee News.



XRCVC: A Spotlight on some success stories in 2022-2023

14	Akasa Air introduces in-flight safety manual in Braille	Published on 5 th Jan, 2023 in TravelWorld.com by the Economic Times.
15	Government needs to help with Refreshable Braille Display, says expert	Published on 05 th Jan, 2023 in The Hindu on World Braille Day.
16	Purple Experience Zone: Seeing the world through a whole new lens	Published on 06 th Jan, 2023 in The Goan.
17	Purple Experience Zone to be Held at Panjim See the World Through a Whole New Lens!	Published on 6 th Jan, 2023 in the Goemkarponn.
18	XRCVC Presents Disability Awareness Experiences At Purple Fest	Published on 07 th Jan, 2023 in Prime Media Goa.
19	Goan Reporter: Ketan Kothari Managing Consultant Programmes, XRCVC, Mumbai spoke on Purple Festival.	Published on 07 th Jan, 2023 in the Goan Reporter. Link 1: https://www.goanreporter.com/goan-reporter-news-ketan-kothari-managing-consultant-programmes-xrcvc-mumbai-spoke-on-purple-festival/ Link 2: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hA9xIb6ujiY
20	Goan Reporter: Poonam Deokar - XRCVC, St. Xavier's College, Mumbai spoke on Inclusive STEM Education	Published on 07 th Jan, 2023 in the Goan Reporter. Link 1: https://www.goanreporter.com/goan-reporter-news-poonam-deokar-xrcvc-st-xaviers-college-mumbai-spoke-on-inclusive-stem-education-at-assistive-technology-exhibition/ Link 2: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zvJAujVEus
21	SBI Foundation Participates in Purple Fest, a First-of-its-kind Inclusive Festival Bringing Together Persons with Disabilities from Across the Country	Published on 10 th Jan, 2023 in the ANI News and The Print.
22	SBI Foundation Participates in Purple Fest, a First-of-its-kind Inclusive Festival Bringing Together Persons with Disabilities from Across the Country	Published on 10 th Jan, 2023 in the Marksmen Daily.
23	SBI Foundation Participates in Purple Fest, a First-of-its-kind Inclusive Festival Bringing Together Persons with Disabilities from Across the Country	Published on 10 th Jan, 2023 in the Times of India.
24	SBI Foundation Participates in Purple Fest, a First-of-its-kind Inclusive Festival Bringing	Published on 11 th Jan, 2023 in the Sangri Today.



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	Together Persons with Disabilities from Across the Country	
25	Dr Sam Taraporevala, the executive director of XRCVC has been felicitated by the Free Press journal as one of the 'Angels of Mumbai' on 16 th of February 2023	<p>Published on 17th Feb, 2023 in the Free Press Journal.</p> <p>Link 1: https://www.freepressjournal.in/mumbai/fpj-felicitates-angels-of-mumbai-for-selfless-service-to-society</p> <p>Link 2: https://epaper.freepressjournal.in/Home/ArticleView?eid=1&edate=17/02/2023&pgid=3703</p> <p>Link 3: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EGoW7G4a8cw</p> <p>Link 4: https://twitter.com/XRCVC</p>
26	SIMSREE holds annual flagship event Mrudhandha 2023, as part of the event XRCVC was invited to organise 2 awareness sessions namely Antarchakshu – the eye within®	Published on 4 th Jul, 2023 in the Indian Express.



