

**2024-2025**

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**XRCVC**

**Success Stories**



**Xavier's Resource Centre for the Visually Challenged**

XRCVC, St. Xavier's College, Mumbai



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## Foreword

Dear Reader/ Well- Wisher,

It is our great privilege to bring to you the third edition of our success stories from the academic year 2024-2025. It is indeed an honour for us to have so many stories to share of the impact we have been able to create on the lives of people with disabilities and society.

As we look back on the last year which brought us the great honour of being awarded the National Award 2024 Divyang Sashaktikaran Hetu Karyarat Sarvashreshtha Sansthan (Inclusive Education) by the Government of India, it is these individuals whose stories stand out for us as they are at the heart of the work we do, beyond the numbers and rewards.

Each of the 18 stories featured here brings forth the journeys of persons with disabilities towards independent and dignified living shaped by the power of inclusive education, technology, accessibility and inclusive mindsets. From students overcoming academic hurdles with the help of tailored interventions, to individuals discovering independence through technology, to the role of awareness and sensitisation in creating inclusive attitudes – these stories are about the impact of collective effort towards empowerment for all.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the diverse stakeholders – funders, partners, and well-wishers whose support and belief in our work have made this impact possible. A big thank you to Tata Investment Corporation Limited, Tata Capital, Boehringer Ingelheim India Pvt. Ltd, Akry Organics, Dhun Pestonji Parakh Discretionary Trust, N.M. Wadia Charities, Katgara Foundation, Salsette Developers Private Limited, Lila K Jagtiani Foundation, Mendonsa Foundation, Sir JJ Foundation, Lions Club of Byculla and Lions Club of East Bombay, (Late) Mr Homi Godha, Mr. Sudhir Shenoy, Mr. Vikram Utamsingh, Ms. Dolly B Mehta, Mr. Belson Coutinho. Mr. Mikhail Behl, Ms. Rashna Doongaji and Ms. Clara Lobo. A thank you also to the team of Salsette Developers Private Limited (Viviana Mall) for all the support extended to the XRCVC – Viviana Extension Centre for its initiatives. Your encouragement and contributions play a vital role in ensuring we are where we are today.

Our gratitude for the Jesuit management of the St. Xavier's College, Mumbai, our rector Dr. (Fr.) Keith D'Souza, S.J., Dr. (Fr.) Conrad Pessa S.J. and his team at the Treasurer's Office, the teams at the General Office, the Social Involvement Programme (SIP) department and the Student Inclusion Cell (SIC). Their whole-hearted support, guidance and belief in our work have made another successful academic year possible for us. A special thank you to the Principal Dr. Rajendra Shinde, as he retires, for his active involvement and encouragement to the work of the XRCVC – we wish you the very best for your new innings.

As you read through these pages, we hope you are moved by the possibilities that open up when society chooses inclusion over exclusion. Let these stories serve as both a celebration and a call—to continue creating a world that is equitable, accessible, and respectful of every individual, regardless of their ability.

Team XRCVC

May 2025

## Inclusive Education

### Inclusion - the XRCVC, St. Xavier's College, Mumbai Way!

One of XRCVC's key focus areas as a department of the St. Xavier's College, Mumbai is to ensure the robustness and implementation of its 360-degree model of inclusive education. In 2024-2025, the XRCVC provided needs-based interventions for 140 students with disabilities, including one with a medical emergency.

This inclusive education model has a 360-degree approach at the centre of which lies the student. Every year each student with disability fills in a detailed accommodations form that provides options for the various kinds of support they may need according to their disability and their preferred modes of studying, writing exams, taking notes in class, assistive technology and trainings etc based on which the XRCVC works with the college management, faculty, peers, family and caregivers, relevant authorities and other stakeholders to implement these. Apart from these, the XRCVC conducts training programmes on inclusive education for the faculty of the college and awareness and sensitisation sessions for peers to ensure an inclusive academic and social environment wherein each student can thrive.

We share here some of the success stories of our students at St. Xavier's College, Mumbai – hear from them their experience of the inclusive education model of the XRCVC.

#### *Varun Walia – Talent to Success*



Varun is a multi-talented student – a passionate sports enthusiast and Table Tennis player who has represented the college at various sporting events, a theatre performer and a model. As an undergraduate student of the Bachelors in Management Studies course, he received support from the XRCVC during his undergraduate years due to Specific Learning Disabilities (Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, and Dyscalculia) as well as Attention Deficit Disorder.

The support provided to him by the centre with the help of the college management was highly individualised to meet his specific needs such as student volunteers as a class buddy, subject-specific teaching volunteers, easy-to-read content, and e-copies of notes, all of which helped him

pursue his academics with ease and confidence. As he graduates this year, he fondly looks back on the time at the college and is especially thankful to XRCVC for the assistance that he received at various stages of his academic life.

To quote him, “A special mention must go to Xavier’s Resource Centre for the Visually Challenged (XRCVC). Their unwavering support, guidance, and accessibility initiatives played a crucial role in my academic and personal development. Whether it was helping with accessible study material, exam support, or simply offering a listening ear during tough times.”

As he has stated, his parents consider their decision to send him to St. Xavier’s as one of the best that they have made. He credits the college but especially the XRCVC with having played a special role in his overall growth, both as a student and as a person.

### *Ishita Shah - Wings to Fly*



Ishita Shah lives with multiple disabilities resulting from Hypoxic Ischemia Encephalopathy. She was also a hesitant and reserved student when she joined the college as she was recovering from a traumatic experience. Her three-year journey to graduation has been nothing short of remarkable.

In the past three years, she has undergone a transition that is truly astounding. As she says: “As a student with low vision, transition to college life had its own challenges —until I found XRCVC, a supportive space that understood my needs and helped me succeed ... academically and personally.”

Ishita received all sorts of support inter alia scribes, accessible study material, training in assistive technology, etc. One of her fondest memories remains her participation in an inclusive cricket tournament. “It was more than just fun—it was empowering,” she says. “It proved that with the right effort, even sports can be made inclusive.”

She credits XRCVC with the efforts that led to her being an empowered person and a successful and confident student who has secured her admission in Xavier’s Institute of Communication, Mumbai for her aspirations to pursue journalism- which is one the most coveted institute for its media courses.

### ***Rohit Pandey - Successfully Moving to the Mainstream***



For Rohit Pandey, joining the Bachelor of Finance program (2022–2025) at St. Xavier’s College, Mumbai was his first real step into a predominantly non-disabled environment as a person with deafness. However, due to the inclusive atmosphere and the support of his teachers, and college management, Rohit found himself not just adjusting, but thriving.

The Xavier’s Resource Centre for the Visually Challenged (XRCVC), and Ms. Poonam Deokar hold a special place in Rohit’s story. Through scholarships and the provision of a hearing aid, the XRCVC ensured he had the tools he needed to succeed. The accommodations made for his learning such as having a class buddy and the support of Assistive Technology helped Rohit stay on track in his academics and participate fully in college life. “Thank you so much, Poonam ma’am and the XRCVC office,” he says with heartfelt gratitude.

Rohit’s story is a reminder that with the right support, every student can excel.

### ***Renzill Soans – Overcoming Invisible Barriers***



Renzill Soans, a student with Specific Learning Disabilities (Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, and Dyscalculia) with Attention Deficit Disorder had always dreamed of studying at the

St. Xavier's College, Mumbai for its inclusive environment and excellence-driven academic atmosphere.

The XRCVC supported Renzill's academic journey based on his real needs over and above what his certificates mentioned. He not only received the help of subject teaching volunteers and readers along with easy-to-read content, but the XRCVC also facilitated the provision of scribes for him for writing exams (which he needed though it was not mentioned in his certificate) by intervening with the college and Maharashtra State Board authorities for his HSC board examinations. His diligence and perseverance along with XRCVC's interventions helped him achieve a high score of 88.67% in his HSC board exams.

Renzill credits his academic success to family encouragement and the structured holistic support that he received from the XRCVC. To quote him, "I was uncertain if I will get the examination provisions, but the XRCVC made it possible."

Renzill's story is a testament to how potential can be unlocked when barriers are removed.

### ***Yoishtaa Umriger – Opportunities and Possibilities***



Yoshitaa Umriger is a student with multiple disabilities. She is a vivacious person who is always eager to try something different. She is also a creative and a good poet.

She says that her journey at St. Xavier's College was truly special. It opened up possibilities and offered her opportunities which would otherwise would have been difficult to come by with her kind of disabilities. To quote her, "XRCVC was a backbone of my college life. They were especially helpful during the lockdown, ... They supported me in understanding the subjects in my BA course and consistently checked in to make sure I never felt left behind."

She credits the centre with the confidence that she has acquired and is quite eager to progress and achieve for herself in the coming future.



## Enabling Independent STEM Learning for Students with Visual Impairment



**Participants of the STEM training at Zoology lab of the St. Xavier's College, Mumbai**



**Learning accessible laboratory skills**

The XRCVC through its various initiatives over the years such as trainings, research, knowledge dissemination and policy engagement has created access for persons with visual impairment in Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education – a field traditionally closed off for them. In this academic year, the XRCVC was invited to sign an MOU with the National Institute for the Empowerment of Persons with Visual Disabilities (NIEPVD) under the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment as subject matter experts for promoting accessible STEM education in the country through nation-wide awareness generation programmes, capacity building for educators and other stakeholders across the country and creating a repository of tutorials and other accessible content for accessible STEM education for persons with visual impairment.

As a part of its ongoing efforts to make STEM education accessible for persons with visual impairment, the XRCVC conducted a training programme on accessible lab skills for the high school students of the Victoria Memorial School for the Blind along with Ms. Mahak Pawar, an undergraduate student of Miranda House – one of the premier women's institutions of Delhi University.

This two-day intensive training conducted by our STEM expert Ms. Poonam Deokar covered a range of techniques for doing lab work such as transferring liquids using tactile methods, measuring liquids accurately, learning to differentiate between types of solids, cleaning, preparing, and placing samples on microscope slides, etc.

The training changed Mahak's scepticism about her ability to do lab work. As Mahak says, "After attending the workshop, I feel like I can actually take part in my practical classes, not just as an observer, but as someone who can work independently. This experience made me believe that being visually impaired doesn't have to stop me from learning science or doing lab work."

Another participant Mubashir Sagri, one of the high school students says, "Thank you. You showed us different labs after taking permission from professors. We got to learn a lot of things."

These workshops are conducted to build the confidence of students with visual impairment in pursuing STEM education at higher education levels and break the stereotype that these subjects are not accessible to them.

## Faculty Development Programme (FDP) – Making Inclusive Classrooms a Reality



Participants in a session MSFDA FDP

"This FDP was immensely valuable in offering a comprehensive perspective on disability — not just as a teacher, but also as a citizen, parent, and researcher. It broadened my understanding and accelerated the development of my sensitivity toward the subject. As a sociologist, this experience has given me new awareness about a segment of society that is often overlooked, and that brings me great satisfaction."

- **Dr. Seema Vithalrao Shete-Nawalakhe, Head of the Department of Sociology, Savitri Jyotirao Social Work College, Yavatmal**

The Maharashtra State Faculty Development Academy, in collaboration with the XRCVC, as part of an MOU between them, organised a 5-day interdisciplinary FDP for 22 professors from higher

education institutes across Maharashtra. The FDP was designed to equip its participants with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to make their classrooms inclusive.

Over the 5 days from 29<sup>th</sup> July to 2<sup>nd</sup> August, the participants engaged in an immersive learning experience which included a blend of classroom learning with simulation activities, hands-on Assistive Technology demonstrations, real-life case studies, problem solving, and quizzes. The sessions were conducted primarily by our in-house inclusive education experts – Ms. Poonam Deokar, Ms. Shizanne D’mello and Mr. Ketan Kothari along with expert inputs from disability-specific experts to ensure the best of the experience for the participants.

The XRCVC believes that these immersive trainings enable teachers to become sensitive and empathetic educators and drivers of inclusive education in their respective institutes and spheres of influence.

## Learning for Life

### IDIA Scholars Training: Equipped for Impact

“...the training program has been a transformative experience, equipping me with the tools and confidence to navigate the world with greater independence.”

- **Rakesh Ittiboina, student National Law University Odisha, IDIA Scholar.**

“I gained more knowledge and practical experience from the training which make me more comfortable and gives confidence in my life.”

- **Rajib Das, IDIA Scholar and student at National Law University Odisha.**

The Xavier’s Resource Centre for the Visually Challenged has established itself as a well-recognised training centre for persons with disabilities and other stakeholders equipping them with skills to enable inclusion of persons with disabilities in the mainstream.

The centre was approached by IDIA (Increasing Diversity by Increasing Access) Law – a not-for-profit organisation that empowers underprivileged and marginalised children through legal education. Their Disability Access wing focusses on imparting legal education to scholars with disabilities, primarily those with visual impairment, and they reached out to the XRCVC for a collaboration to impart holistic training to their scholars.

The training was planned in multiple phases to ensure greater impact. In the first phase, our former team member, Mr. Sushil Pandit, visited New Delhi and conducted a hands-on three-day training for the proficient use of computers with screen-readers.

In the second phase of the training programme, an intensive month-long training programme was held in June 2024 wherein IDIA scholars from across the country stayed in Mumbai and were trained on various themes such as Information and Communication Technology, Orientation and

Mobility, Activities of Daily Living, Visual Concept Enrichment, Graphing skills, advocacy and self-advocacy to help them develop practical skills for professional and personal life for their holistic development and independence.



**Introducing Assistive Technology to IDIA Scholars**



**Activities of Daily Living training for the IDIA Scholars**



**IDIA Scholars exploring the Accessible ATM**



The trainings went beyond the classroom and during the month, the scholars practised travelling independently, navigating new places, using public transport in Mumbai such as local trains, buses, etc. They were also oriented to different kinds of access technologies and STEM-related activities. Practical exercises were conducted for developing non-confrontational advocacy skills for various issues and setting. They were also trained to access online libraries so that they would be able to read and learn by themselves – a skill highly relevant to professional growth in a career in law.

The quotes above from their self-reports at the end of the training programme is a testament to the success of the training for the IDIA scholar. As they say for themselves, the training programme has enabled them to navigate their professional and personal lives in a more confident and proficient manner.

### Sachin Porwal: Confident Steps to Self-Reliance



**Sachin Porwal at the Orientation and Mobility Training of the XRCVC**

“I’ve undergone a significant transformation, feeling more confident and optimistic. I am incredibly grateful and fortunate to have participated in this program.”

- **Sachin Porwal, IDIA Scholar, Law Student University of NALSAR, Hyderabad**

Sachin Porwal was a trainee of the month-long training programme by the XRCVC for scholars from IDIA (Increasing Diversity by Increasing Access) Law organised in June 2024 in Mumbai.

Sachin, having lost sight later in life, had lived in an overprotective family environment, wherein a family member would always accompany him wherever he needed to go. As a result, he had developed very few skills of mobility and was dependent on sighted assistance for moving around and even the most basic tasks.

This became quite an issue for him when he had to move to Hyderabad from his hometown to pursue his education in law. There he found himself dependent on roommates, batchmates and seniors for “even minor tasks like reaching the dining hall, refilling my water bottle, or attending

classes” and his mobility was limited to their availability. He tried to learn some techniques from a friend or on his own, which helped him navigate parts of the campus but did not enable him to be completely independently mobile. Moreover, during his internship in May 2024 at Delhi (just before the XRCVC training), he was highly dependent on expensive cabs and flights for commuting and travelling as he did not have the confidence to use public transport independently.

During his training with the other IDIA scholars at the XRCVC in June, he had requested a special emphasis on Orientation & Mobility (O&M) skills in the limited time he had in Mumbai due to other prior commitments. Post the XRCVC training, he got an opportunity to join Hindustan Unilever Ltd. (HUL) as an intern and came to Mumbai and lived independently.

Sachin has many interests and as it happened, he wanted to attend a stand-up comedy show by a popular artiste. He had wanted to attend shows of this artiste many times previously, but could not because of no company and restricted mobility. This time also he did not have any company, but he thought to himself when will I ever use my training and started on the adventurous journey from his residence in Andheri to the show venue in Bandra and back during peak Christmas season. This time instead of an expensive cab, he decided to try using the public transport and negotiated the Mumbai traffic, autorickshaws, railway stations and local trains successfully and fulfilled his wish of watching the show. He wholeheartedly attributed his success in this adventure to the training that he acquired at the centre with Ms. Shizanne D’mello, our O&M expert who had trained him, whom he reached out to with happiness and gratitude about his story after attending the show.

This story is not only about the skills Sachin acquired to travel independently but has also the confidence to live independently and navigate various situations of life.

## **Siddhi Dalvi – Moving Around Independently to Get Ahead!**

Siddhi Dalvi is a bright student who cleared her SSC last year with flying colours. She was the first ever student who has appeared for her SSC exams using a computer in Maharashtra State Board.

She has been with XRCVC throughout her childhood undergoing trainings in various skills. However, she had missed her Orientation and Mobility (O&M) classes on account of the COVID lockdown.

She eventually enrolled herself for O&M classes during her SSC vacation. She completed the same before her college started and put her newly acquired skills to immediate use to commute to coaching classes and college.

She had to travel by train to attend her FYJC coaching classes which she could successfully undertake as she had received the necessary training. Furthermore, she selected one of the best commerce colleges in the city, the Poddar College, which is quite far from her residence. This necessitated her to commute daily by train which she does alone successfully every day. Moreover, she confidently travels in the regular ladies coach rather than using the special coach reserved for the disabled increasing her participation in mainstream society.



**Siddhi Dalvi walking around in Mumbai**

It is indeed heartening to see her travel confidently. In fact, she is confident that as she travels independently and improves upon her mobility skills, she can travel wherever required. As she says, "Thank You XRCVC for Orientation and Mobility skills Course, Thank You Shizanne Ma'am for Executing the Techniques on Mobility."

## **Transformative Role of Technology**

### **Ananya Srivastava: Restarting Dreams through Digital Empowerment**



Ananya Srivastava reached out to the XRCVC to help her acquire skills for living with her progressive vision loss.

After completing B. Tech in Electronic Engineering in 2020 she enrolled herself in an MBA Program at IMT (Institute of Management Technology), Hyderabad. However as her sight worsened, she had

to leave her academic pursuit mid-way. This was a shattering blow. She completely lost her confidence and was disappointed with her life.

She was referred to XRCVC by an acquaintance. She spoke to Mr. Vikas Dabholkar at the centre as she was keen on learning how to operate computers independently. Her knowledge of computers was elementary. With the training that she received from the centre, she regained her confidence and was able to use various applications independently.

As she says, “From struggling to even turn on a computer to now working on it independently, my progress has been remarkable with XRCVC. I’m growing everyday”

Thus, Ananya’s journey has been truly remarkable. She is looking forward to continue her studies and work towards a corporate career.

## Mr. Kakalia – A silver lining in his silver years



Mr. Kakalia experienced progressive sight loss at the age of 90 and as a result experienced loss of mobility, independence in daily activities and his interests such as reading. He heard of the XRCVC and its support work for persons with vision loss through a common friend of his and Dr. Sam Taraporevala.

Seeing a silver lining, he and his family got in touch with Dr. Sam, conversations with whom about the potential of Assistive Technology motivated him to visit the centre and explore the technology for his needs. During his extensive visit, he and his family were introduced to various low vision Assistive Technology such as video magnifiers and other aids of daily living like signature guide, etc. “The showed us the various possibilities of how he could be independent,” said Ms. Kashmira Kakalia his daughter-in-law who had accompanied him on this visit.

Being an avid reader, he was quite enthusiastic about using the video magnifier to be able to get back to reading despite the sight-loss. The XRCVC through its lending scheme, lent him the video magnifier to allow him to ensure he is able to learn to use it independently and confidently before investing in an expensive piece of technology. Moreover, when the centre acquired another advanced version of the video magnifier, Mr. Aniket Gupta of team XRCVC visited his place and spent a long time with him to orient him to it. Mr. Kakalia learnt to use the new technology independently for his reading and his children gifted him a new one for his birthday.



“It has made me very happy that I could read which I could not otherwise and the selfless service I received was just wonderful, I must say,” said Mr Kakalia about his experience of the XRCVC’s support.

## **Tech Roshni – A Step at Bridging the Digital Divide for Persons with Disabilities**

The Tech Roshni series of awareness workshops rose out of a felt need during Covid times to ensure persons with disabilities – particularly those with blindness and low vision – stay in touch with the latest trends in technology. The Tech Roshni workshops are conducted as a regular hourly series on Saturdays in an online format and are one of XRCVC’s most popular programs for persons with disabilities.

The Tech Roshni programs are not intensive training programs, but an introduction and basic orientation to various technologies to make participants aware of the range of existing technology and choose to dive deep into the ones that meet their particular needs.

Drishti Gaba, a regular attendee of the Tech Roshni series, states that “Earlier, before attending the workshops, I became aware of LibreOffice, InDrive application, Robo Braille website, Tesseract OCR add-on, Balabolka, etc., thanks to Tech Roshni workshops. After attending the workshops, I came to know about these applications and websites that will benefit me in the long run. The best part is that participants are encouraged to give feedback to the developers so that developers can implement the necessary changes and improve the accessibility of the applications.”

Moreover, the XRCVC’s technology team – Mr. Vikas Dabholkar, Mr. Keshavan Nadar and Mr. Tejas Karanje – actively research and innovate the range of topics covered in series to keep up with the times. Last year, the Tech Roshni series covered various latest tools and apps crucial to independence in workplace, education and daily life for persons with disabilities such as Microsoft products to Google to current AI products.



“The training covered practical computer and mobile phone skills that are essential for your use and empowerment. The trainers were patient, knowledgeable, and inclusive in their approach.” Says Ms. Pallavi Bhise, a late blind participant.



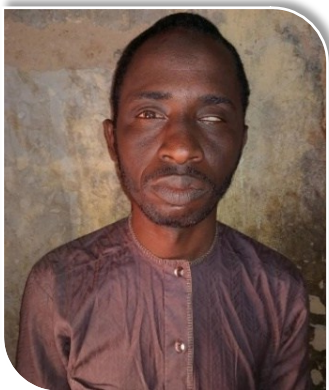
“Participants have appreciated Tech Roshni workshops for their accessibility and brevity. It is an USP of this workshop that awareness gets created about various apps and products, which enables participants to explore them in more detail, as Pratik Ghag says, “After attending all these sessions, I got the confidence to explore all these things in depth by myself. Due to which my professional life has become easier and faster.”

## Breaking Barriers Beyond Borders - XRCVC's Computer Training Programs

One of XRCVC's most popular offerings is the computer training certification programmes for persons with visual impairment which include the Basic Computer Training (BCT) and the Intermediate Computer Training (ICT). The BCT is a 48-hour programme that covers the basics of using computers with the open-source screen-reader NVDA to enable the students to use a computer independently for daily activities – work, education, personal use, etc. The ICT is a 60-hour training programme that builds on the learnings of the BCT to enable students to use key Microsoft Office applications such as MS Word, MS Excel and MS PowerPoint.

These courses were adapted to an online format during Covid times due to the need of the hour and this helped spread their reach to an international audience which continued even post – Covid as there was a demand for them.

During this year, the XRCVC conducted 3 batches of the BCT course and 1 batch of the ICT course for participants in Nigeria and 1 batch of the BCT training program for participants in Ghana apart from the training programmes offered in India.



The story of Hussaini Muhammad – one of our students from Nigeria — brings forth the importance of these courses. Hussaini Muhammad lost sight late in life because of which he was unable to contribute to his job and was not given any work. Unhappy with not being able to productively contribute, he enrolled for XRCVC’s BCT program and learnt basics of computers with screen-reader. He found the training quite effective and has written an appreciation note to Mr. Vikas Dabholkar – Computer Trainer, XRCVC, which states that “Your virtual lectures have been truly engaging and informative, and I'm really enjoying learning from you. Your patience, clarity, and enthusiasm have made the learning process so much fun, even from afar.” As a result of his training he is able to operate computers independently for basic tasks such as typing and he has been increasingly contributing to the workload of the team. He expressed his gratitude for the role of XRCVC’s computer training programmes in turning around his work life and writes, “I also want to extend my appreciation to Xavier's Resource Centre for the Visually Challenged (XRCVC) for providing this wonderful opportunity for visually impaired individuals like myself to acquire computer skills. Your organization's commitment to empowering the visually challenged is truly inspiring, and I feel grateful to be a part of it. Thank you for making a positive impact on my life and the lives of my fellow Nigerian students.”

The computer training programmes signify more than just the skills learnt – in the bigger picture they are about independence, productivity, participation in work and society and inclusion for all.

## Awareness and Policy Engagement for Systemic Change

### Bridging the Gap to Inclusive Future: Access Setu Assistive Technology Awareness Exhibition

XRCVC is a one-of-a-kind resource centre for Assistive Technology in the country housing over 250 Assistive Technology across disabilities. The XRCVC has always strongly believed in the power of technology in creating a level-playing field for persons with disabilities – in education, work and daily lives and spreading awareness about them has always been a core part of XRCVC’s work. XRCVC’s highly impactful Assistive Technology Exhibitions have reached over **13,000** persons till date. To mark its 20<sup>th</sup> year, in 2024, the XRCVC consolidated the impact of these Assistive Technology awareness exhibitions by rebranding it into “Access Setu: Pathways to an Inclusive Future” to build an inclusive society where technology becomes an enabler for all.

The XRCVC organised an Assistive Technology awareness exhibition “Access Setu: Pathways to an Inclusive Future” at the IF.BE, Ballard Estate to mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 2025.

The exhibition was inaugurated by Mr. Sarosh Amaria, Managing Director, Tata Capital Ltd whose encouraging words about XRCVC’s work for the inclusion for persons with disabilities in society and the time he spent to go through the entire exhibition set the tone for the day.



**Mr. Sarosh Amaria, MD Tata Capital learning about accessible STEM aids at Access Setu: Pathways to an Inclusive Future**



**Assistive Technology for VI at the Access Setu: Pathways to an Inclusive Future – Assistive Technology awareness exhibition**

This exhibition designed to create awareness about the transformative potential of Assistive Technology among the general population showcased a wide range of pan-disability Assistive Technologies. The demonstration featured solutions for various disabilities, including visual



impairment, low vision, neurodevelopmental disorders (NDD), and mobility challenges. Key highlights included the Tobii eye-tracking computer, which enables users to control digital interfaces using only their eye movements, and a stair-climbing wheelchair, demonstrating breakthroughs in mobility support. Visitors also explored accessible ATMs, daily living aids, and tools specifically designed for individuals with low vision or visual impairment.

The event drew over a whopping 300 attendees in one day including educators, students, persons with disabilities, caregivers, NGOs, corporate leadership and employees, ophthalmologists, and philanthropists among others. Some of the feedback shared by attendees includes:

“Despite being associated with the disability space learned several new things today. Thank you!”

- **Moneisha Gandhi, Founder, Buddy Up Network**

“Very informative. Encourages inclusive thinking.”

- **Dr. Radhika Krishnan**

“Visiting the disability technology exhibition was a heartwarming experience. It’s inspiring to see how technology is making life easier and more inclusive for everyone. Hats off to the people making this possible!”

- **Sagar Dhoot, Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA)**

“The exhibition was expansive and well executed. There were many novel equipments which are excellent in increasing accessibility.”

- **Maahika Kadel**



**Stairclimbing wheelchair at the Access Setu Exhibition**

Another highlight for Team XRCVC on this day was pausing the exhibition to watch the XRCVC receive the National Award 2024 – Divyang Sashaktikaran Hetu Karyarat Sarvashreshtha Sansthan (Inclusive Education) by the Honourable President of India – an emotionally charged moment of great pride shared and celebrated together.

## **Antarchakshu® Disability Sensitisation Workshop for the Hon'ble Chief Minister's Office, Government of Maharashtra**

XRCVC's flagship disability sensitisation program - Antarchakshu® grew from a felt-need to address barriers resulting from the uninformed attitudes and beliefs among people about lives of persons with disabilities hindering the inclusion of persons with disabilities in various spheres of society. The Antarchakshu® in its evolving formats has reached close to 50,000 persons from various walks of life – policy makers, government officials, educators, students, bankers, corporate employees, special educators creating inclusive mindsets.

On 6th February 2025, the XRCVC was invited to conduct an Antarchakshu® 2.0 workshop for the officers and staff of the Hon'able Chief Minister's Office at the Mantralaya, Mumbai. The workshop, conducted entirely in Marathi, witnessed enthusiastic participation from around 50 staff members and officers who chose to stay back after working hours to engage in this immersive experience.



**Simulation Activities of the Antarchakshu®2.0 workshop for the staff of the Hon'able Chief Minister's Office, Govt. of Maharashtra**



**Debriefing session of the Antarchakshu® 2.0**

The session began with a series of hands-on simulation exercises designed to create sensitisation about various kinds of disabilities – both visible and invisible. Our team members Ms. Disha Kapadia and Mr Aniket Gupta led the participants through this immersive experience. These powerful simulations offered participants the opportunity to step into the shoes of persons with disabilities, fostering empathy and deeper awareness. This was followed by an engaging debriefing session with Mr. Ketan Kothari, Managing Consultant Programs, XRCVC during which stories of his lived experiences and candid answers to the questions of the participants brought home the key learnings of the session.

The workshop was highly appreciated by the participants as a meaningful experience that furthered their understanding of disability and strengthened their resolve towards a more inclusive approach in their work and personal lives. Mr. H.V. Argunde shared, “My personal approach towards disabled persons improved a lot... awareness in the society is a must” whereas Mr. Ajay Wagh called it an “eye-opening experience”.

The session reaffirmed the crucial role of awareness and sensitisation in creating policy environments that are inclusive and empowering for persons with disabilities.

## **Metro Accessibility Audit – Towards Inclusive Infrastructure**

The Xavier’s Resource Centre for the Visually Challenged (XRCVC), a pan-disability support centre, has always had creation of inclusive systems through accessibility of mainstream products and services as a core focus of its work.

The XRCVC was invited by the Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation Limited (MMRCL) to conduct an accessibility audit of Mumbai Metro Line 3 (MML3). This initiative is part of MMRCL’s mission to develop an inclusive and accessible metro system for Mumbai. The audit was carried out at Marol Naka and BKC Metro Stations.



**Metro Station Accessibility Audit by commuters with disabilities for the MML3**





### **Travelling on the metro during the accessibility audit by commuters with disabilities for the MML3**

The primary aim of the audit conducted on 14<sup>th</sup> December, 2024 was to identify accessibility challenges, assess compliance with established accessibility standards, and provide practical, actionable recommendations for improvement. These efforts are part of a broader vision to promote accessible urban mobility and foster an equitable transportation network.

As part of the audit, XRCVC brought together a diverse group of 20 individuals with various disabilities. This group spent the day using and evaluating the services and infrastructure at the selected metro stations. Their hands-on assessment provided valuable insights into the user experience of commuters with disabilities.

The findings and recommendations generated from this audit will contribute towards enhancing accessibility at these metro stations, ensuring that Mumbai Metro Line 3 is a truly inclusive transit system for all citizens.



## Awards and Recognitions in 2024-2025

The year 2024-2025 has been a watershed year in the history of the XRCVC, St. Xavier's College. Apart from it completing two decades of its work, the XRCVC and its team have received several awards and accolades for its impactful work towards the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

### National Award 2024 to XRCVC, St. Xavier's College

XRCVC, St. Xavier's College, Mumbai part of The Bombay St. Xavier's College Society was awarded the National Award 2024 "Divyang Sashaktikaran Hetu Sarveshrestha Sansthan (Private organization, NGO)" in the Inclusive Education Category by the Government of India.



**National Award 2024 - Divyang Sashaktikaran Hetu Sarveshrestha Sansthan (Inclusive Education)  
Government of India.**

XRCVC was conferred this award for its pathbreaking work in the field of inclusive education over the past two decades. This award recognises its achievements as a national-level pan-disability support and training centre, one of the country's best Assistive Technology hubs with over 250 ATs in-house and the great strides it has made towards inclusion of persons with disabilities in India through its flagship awareness programmes and trailblazing policy work championing their rights and impacting policy decisions at the micro and macro levels.

The XRCVC received the award from the Honourable President of India on the 3rd of December, which is the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

**NAB India's R. M. Alpaiwalla Memorial Award (Professional Category) -  
Mr. Ketan Kothari (Managing Consultant – Programs, XRCVC)**



**Mr. Ketan Kothari being awarded the R.M. Alpaiwalla Memorial Award (Professional Category) by the Hon'able Governor of Mumbai Shri C.P. Radhakrishnan**

Mr. Ketan Kothari, Managing Consultant - Programs, XRCVC was conferred the prestigious R.M. Alpaiwalla Memorial Award in the Professional Category conferred by National Association for the Blind-India (NAB-India).

This award is a recognition of Mr. Kothari's impactful contribution towards the empowerment of persons with visual impairments in various roles and capacities in his professional career that spans over three decades.

Mr Kothari received this award from the Governor of Maharashtra Shri C P Radhakrishnan on 20th of January on the occasion of the 74th Foundation Day of NAB-India in Mumbai.

**Dr. Sam Taraporevala was conferred the Distinguished Alumni recognition by the St. Xavier's College, Mumbai**



**Dr. Sam Taraporevala being felicitated as 'Distinguished Alumni' by the Rector Dr. (Fr.) Keith, SJ and Dr. Rajendra Shinde, Principal (retd) – St. Xavier's College, Mumbai**

**Dr. Sam Taraporevala** was conferred the **Distinguished Alumni** recognition by the **St. Xavier's College, Mumbai** on the occasion of the Alumni Dinner organised by the college and the Alumni Association in December, 2024 for his contribution towards creating an inclusive society for persons with disabilities through the initiatives of the National Award- winning XRCVC, St. Xavier's College Mumbai.

### **Lions Club International Felicitation on World Teacher's Day – Dr. Sam Taraporevala (Executive Director – XRCVC)**



#### **Dr. Sam Taraporevala felicitated by the Lions Club International on World Teacher's Day**

Dr Sam Taraporevala was felicitated by the Lions International Club District 3231 for his contribution to education, particularly inclusive education, on the occasion of World Teacher's Day.

This award is a recognition of his exceptional contributions that have significantly advanced the rights, dignity, and inclusion of persons with disabilities.

Dr. Sam Taraporevala was conferred this award at a ceremony in June 2024.

### **Lions Club of Byculla Lifetime Achievement Award 2023-2024 – Dr. Sam Taraporevala (Executive Director – XRCVC)**

Dr. Sam Taraporevala of the XRCVC was conferred the Lifetime Achievement Award 2023-2024 by the Lions Club of Byculla in June 2024.



## Media Coverage

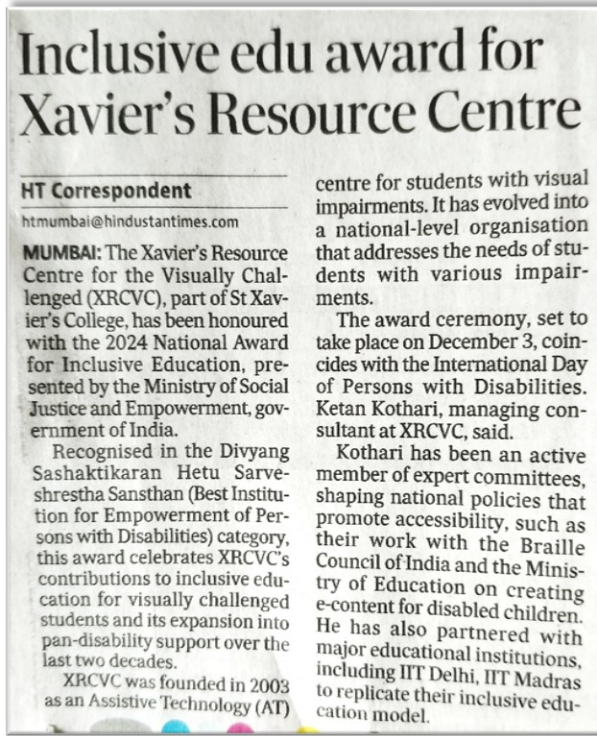
- 'Sirens to alert us of raids? We won't be able to hear it': Highlighting the need to train persons with disabilities for emergency protocols - Sunday Mid Day - 11 May 2025 - [Link to the Article](#)



- Xavier's Resource Centre for the Visually Challenged ya Sansthela Sarvashreshtha Sanstha Shrenit Puraskar - Good News Maharashtra DD Sahayadri – 22<sup>nd</sup> December, 2024 [Link to Video](#)
- Exhibition showcases Assistive Tech for differently abled – Indian Express 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 2024



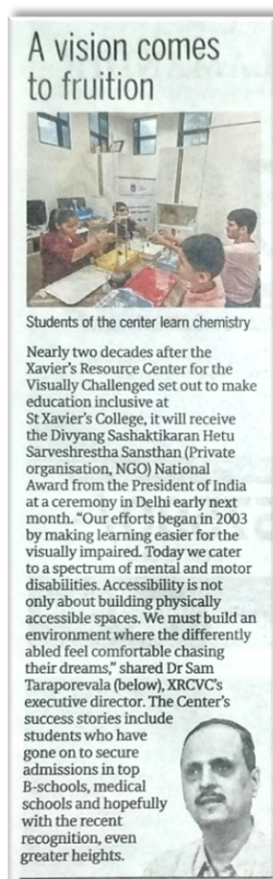
- Xavier's Resource Centre for the Visually Challenged awarded for inclusive education – Hindustan Times - 11<sup>th</sup> November, 2024



- St. Xavier's la Rashtriya Puraskar – Loksatta 12<sup>th</sup> November, 2024



- A Vision Comes to Fruition – Mid Day 12<sup>th</sup> November, 2024



- St. Xavier's centre wins the nat'l award – Times of India 12<sup>th</sup> November, 2024



- NIEPVD signs 2 MoUs for the welfare of Persons with Visual Impairment – Garhwal Post 25<sup>th</sup> July, 2024 [Link to Article](#)





# X R C V C

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## Xavier's Resource Centre for the Visually Challenged

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