



Diversity and Inclusion Horizon 2024: Empowering the Future Workforce

On September 21, 2024, HTBF hosted the Diversity & Inclusion Horizon event at Orbit by Auro Reality, Hyderabad, an impactful initiative aimed at expanding the scope of diversity and inclusion by integrating visually impaired (VI) individuals into the workforce. The event brought together thought leaders, corporate professionals, and advocates for accessibility and inclusion to discuss and explore the immense potential of visually impaired individuals in the business world. The day started with **Mr. Moses Choudhury** of Enable India, Bangalore, engaging in a lively discussion with visually impaired students from various colleges in Hyderabad about their aspirations. The agenda for the day was filled with powerful panel discussions, each focusing on different aspects of integrating VI individuals into the workforce. Experts like **Mr. Mario David** – JP Morgan, Human Resource & OD Partner; **Ms. Sirisha Kommireddy** – Cigniti, Talent Development HR & OD; and **Mr. Venkatesh Chawan** – Head HR, Aster Prime Hospital, led a robust conversation on the business case for employing visually impaired individuals and the return on investment that comes with inclusive hiring. Their insights emphasized not only the value of diversity but also the undeniable business benefits that arise from investing in a more inclusive workforce. Another key highlight was the panel on the Impact of AI and DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) on Education and Employment for VI individuals, featuring thought leaders like **Mr. Raghavendra Satish Peri** – Accessibility Specialist; **Mr. Sriram Venkateshwaran** – Google; **Ms. Sarbani Rani Sill** – Help the Blind Foundation, and moderated by the young Uma Shankar, a visually impaired social media influencer. The discussion inspired attendees by exploring the positive impact of AI on VI individuals, particularly in education and employment. The session provided real-world examples of how businesses can leverage emerging technologies like AI to support the visually impaired in their careers and studies. The event's inspirational tone continued with **Mr. Uma Shankar**, who shared his personal journey of navigating the digital world and how technology empowered him to lead an independent and successful life. Another significant panel discussion focused on Leveraging Accessibility Technology for Workplace Accommodations, featuring leaders like **Mr. Srinivasu Chakravarthula** – Director of Accessibility, Freshworks; **Ms. Suman Damera** – Senior Principal Accessibility Engineer at Phenom; **Mr. Ramesh Chandra** – Data Scientist & Java

Developer, JP Morgan and Chase; and **Mr. Ramachandra Maddela**, CHRO. The day wrapped up with participants interacting, sharing insights, and exploring collaborations with the shared goal of transforming the lives of youngsters with visual impairment. However, **Mr. Srikanth Surampudi**, the GM & Regional Head HR at TCS, was missed, as he could not join the event due to last-minute changes in his schedule.

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Signing of MOU between National Rehabilitation University and HTBF

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between the National Rehabilitation University and Help the Blind Foundation on July 20, 2024, under the supervision of the Department for the Visually Impaired, in the presence of the esteemed Vice-Chancellor, **Prof. Sanjay Singh**. The agreement was executed by **Mr. Rohit Singh**, Secretary of the National Rehabilitation University, and **Mr. Nataraj Sankaran**, Trustee of Help the Blind Foundation.



Help the Blind Foundation has committed to providing various training programs on the university campus aimed at educating visually impaired students, enhancing their independent mobility, and offering vocational education and training.

The primary goal of this agreement is to prepare visually impaired students for employment. First-year students from all departments and courses at the university will be selected to receive education and training throughout their academic journey. This includes independent mobility training, technical knowledge acquisition, and employment preparation, with a focus on interview readiness, communication skills, and basic and advanced computer skills in English and other languages.

During the event, presided over by Prof. Sanjay Singh, the collaborative effort was highly praised. Mr. Nataraj Sankaran expressed HTBF's commitment to providing comprehensive educational facilities for visually impaired students at the university, noting how the current batch of 30 trainees could serve as motivators for future cohorts.

The event was also attended by Mr. Rohit Singh, Secretary of the University; **Mr. Srinivas Tripathi**, Finance Officer; **Prof. Chandra Kumar Dixit**, Chief Proctor; **Prof. Yashwant Kumar Virodav**, University Media In-charge; **Prof. Kaushal Sharma**, Dean of the Faculty of Special Education; **Dr. Vijay Shankar Sharma**, Head of the Department for the Visually Impaired; **Dr. Aadya Shakti Rai**; **Mr. Ashish Kumar Gupta**; **Dr. Dinesh Kumar**; **Dr. Brijesh Kumar Rai**; **Mr. Neeraj Dixit**; **Dr. Sudha Rao**; **Ms. Pooja Bomb**, Project Officer; and many of the students. During the occasion, students shared their training experiences, which were highly praised by both the Vice-Chancellor and the Trustee.



Inauguration of Early Intervention Program at Amalarakkini School, Arni

On August 5, 2024, the inaugural function of the Early Intervention Program at the Amalarakkini School in Arni was successfully held at 11 AM.

The event began with the ceremonial lighting of the lamp and a warm welcome speech by the headmaster, **Brother J. Leveil**, where he also expressed gratitude for the building, built in 2012 by HTBF and newly renovated by **Mrs Niti Patel**.

Mr. SundarKumar, HTBF Trustee, emphasized the foundation's commitment to enhancing education through ongoing support, while **Ms. Gayathri**, HTBF Team Leader, inspired students with a motivational speech, encouraging perseverance and dedication to their studies. The program concluded with a vote of thanks and by setting a positive tone for the academic year ahead.

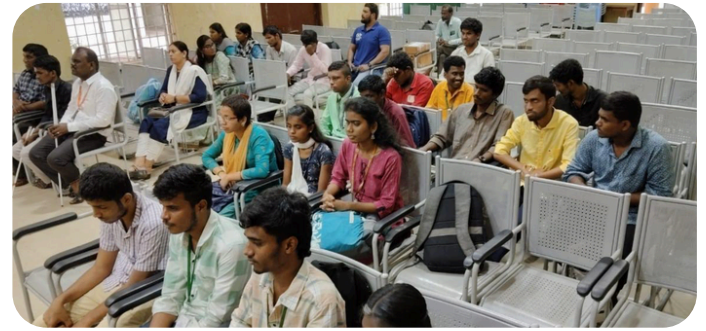
Successful Launch of EMET Training in Nashik

On July 2nd, we successfully launched the EMET training program at KTHM College, MVP campus. During the event, laptops and keyboards were distributed to the students, with a total of 33 students participating. **Mr. Rajamani**, **Ms. Pooja**, and **Ms. Hamsini** provided insights into the work of Help the Blind Foundation and the EMET course, highlighting its impact and importance.

Mr. Nithin Thakkare Gangal, Secretary of MVP SAMA], and **Mr. Dharekar**, Principal of KTHM College, praised HTBF's efforts and motivated the students to participate regularly in the EMET course. Aryan, a visually impaired B.Tech student, shared his inspiring journey, encouraging fellow students to pursue their goals with determination.



Smart Vision Glass and Laptop Distributions By HTBF



On July 16, 2024, the Smart Vision Glasses (SVG) distribution event was held at Govt Arts College, Nandanam, with 32 attendees present and 9 SVG glasses distributed. *Thank you, Dr. Jothivenkateshwaran and team.*



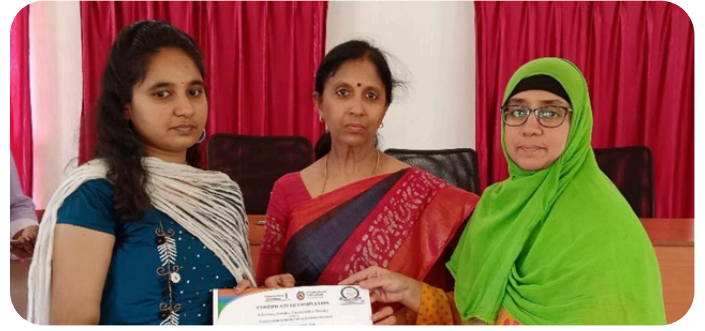
On July 23, 2024, the Smart Vision Glasses (SVG) and Laptop distribution event was held at Raja Sarfoji College in Tanjore, with 35 students from seven colleges. *Thank you, Dr Bhuvaneshwaran, Dr Malarvizhi and team.*



On July 22, 2024, 16 Smart Vision Glasses (SVG) devices were successfully distributed to candidates from the 2023-2025 batch in the Nagpur region. *Thank you, Ms. Bhumi Mehre, Mr. Shailesh Bahadure and team.*



On July 30, 2024, the Smart Vision Glasses (SVG) and Laptop distribution event was held at Blind People Association in Ahmedabad, with 26 students from seven colleges.



On 26th July 2024, the Certificate and Laptop distribution event was held at **Ramakrishna Mission Vidhyalaya - Vivekanadhar Deemed University**. *Thank you, Mr. Santhosh and Cognizant Foundation team*



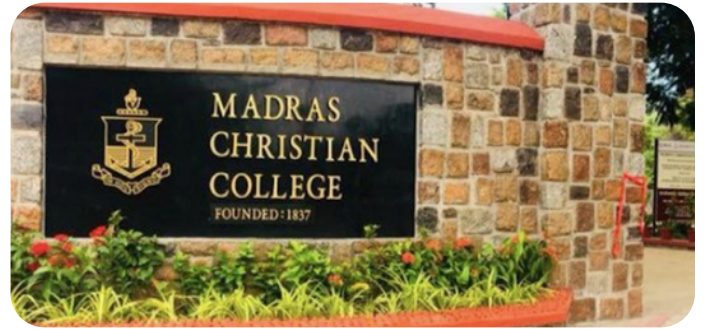
On August 2, 2024, the Smart Vision Glasses (SVG) distribution event was held at **Maharaja Sayajirao University, Vadodara**, with 10 students. *Thank you, Prof Ankur Saxena and team.*



On August 24, 2024, the Smart Vision Glasses (SVG) distribution event was held at **Kirti M Doongursee College, Mumbai**, with 18 students. *Thank you, Dr M. S. Jog, Dr Rekha Charate and team.*



On Sept 26, 2024, the Laptop distribution event was held at **Government College for Arts, Nandanam**, with 18 students. *Thank you, Mr. Aruljothi Venkatesh, Mr. Girivasan, Mr. Baskaran, and team.*



On Sept 23, 2024, the Laptop distribution event was held at Miller Memorial Library, Madras Christianity College, Chennai with 9 students. *Thank you, Dr. Sridhar, Dr. Janis and team.*



On Sept 27, 2024, the Laptop distribution event was held at Government First Grade College, Bangalore with 28 students. *Thank you, Dr. Shubha Ramesh, Dr. Lalithamba and team.*



On Sept 30, 2024, the Laptops, Bags, and Headphones distribution event was held at Dr. Ambedkar College, Nagpur, with 27 students. *Thank you, Mr. Vitthalsing Rajput, Mr. Shailesh Bahadure, Ms. Rohini Meshram and team.*



On Aug 05, 2024, the Keyboard, Laptop and Smart Vision Glasses distribution event was held at MTB Arts College, Surat.

Short Term Training (STT)

Nagpur

The STT program took place from July 1st to August 14th, 2024, which included 30 days of in-person sessions and 15 days of online coursework. Intending to enhance candidates' skills and employability, the program welcomed 15 participants from various regions like Delhi, Indore, and Nagpur. Led by trainers **Mr. Anup** and **Ms. Bhumika Wawre**, under the guidance of Team Lead **Mr. Dhiraj**.

Throughout the 30 days of training, candidates engaged in group discussions, community projects, and leadership development activities to foster financial independence and improve employability.

Among the program's achievements, one candidate was selected as a skill development trainer at Help the Blind Foundation, while others secured interviews with notable companies like Birlasoft and Vindiya Info Tech.



Bangalore

The training was conducted in partnership with **Winvinaya Foundation**, and concluded on Aug 30, 2024 with a remarkable valedictory function, entirely organized by the students. The event was emceed by trainee **Ms. Maneesha** and featured an inspiring demonstration by **Mr. Mahesh Gengaje**.

Additionally, students performed a skit aimed at raising awareness of their capabilities, a typing competition followed, where Ms. Deepika achieved the highest score of 42 words per minute with 100% accuracy.

Certificates were distributed, and students expressed heartfelt gratitude to Help the Blind Foundation (HTBF) and Winvinaya Foundation for their support throughout their learning journey. The audience learned about HTBF's various programs designed to assist the visually impaired.



Providing Exposure to Students with Industrial Visits

Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited, Gurugram

On August 9, 2024, our EMET students from the 2023-2025 batch enjoyed a special visit to Deloitte office in Gurugram in celebration of Friendship Day. The event aimed to foster inclusion, provide insights into the corporate environment, and build connections between the Deloitte team and our candidates. Candidates participated in an interactive session with Deloitte employees, discussing career development and assistive technologies. To celebrate Friendship Day, attendees exchanged stories and friendship bands, creating a sense of community. The event concluded with remarks from Deloitte's senior management, who expressed their dedication to inclusivity and thanked the students for their enthusiastic participation. Overall, the visit offered invaluable insights into the corporate world and reinforced the importance of friendship and diversity in the workplace.



Coca-Cola Company, Lucknow

On September 6, 2024, a visit to the Coca-Cola Manufacturing Unit in Lucknow was organized for 30 EMET candidates from HTBF and 6 M.Ed. students from Dr. Shakuntala Mishra National Rehabilitation University (DSMNRU). Upon arrival, participants underwent a safety briefing and were welcomed by **Mr. Ashwini Saini**, General Manager at Coca-Cola, who provided insights into the company's manufacturing processes for both carbonated and non-carbonated beverages. Key discussions included the importance of accessibility tools for visually impaired individuals, as well as Coca-Cola's commitment to exploring employment opportunities for them in the future. Overall, the visit was a valuable experience that provided EMET candidates with insights into the corporate world, enhanced their understanding of the challenges faced by visually impaired individuals, and reinforced the commitment to inclusion and support within the workplace.



Cognizant Foundation, Chennai

On September 21, 2024, the EMET Chennai program took 19 students from the 2023-2025 batch to the Cognizant Foundation in Sholinganallur for a valuable corporate experience. The visit began with a cybersecurity workshop led by **Mr. John Wheller**, Chief Security Officer (CSO), who discussed career opportunities for visually impaired individuals in the field. Following this, **Mr. Dhilip**, Senior HR, conducted an engaging session on teamwork and business management, where students created their own firms and presented their ideas. The day concluded with a workshop on interview skills, focusing on techniques to understand the interviewer's mindset. This visit, supported by trainers and various participating colleges, provided essential insights and enhanced the students' job-seeking skills, bridging the gap between academic learning and the corporate world.



Airbnb Inc, Gurugram

On August 22, 2024, an enriching exposure visit, attended by 13 candidates, three trainers (**Ms. Khushboo, Ms. Aishwarya, and Mr. Anup**), and Placement team including **Mr. Lakshminarayan and Ms. Divya Eisen**. The event aimed to enhance awareness of the visually impaired community within the company and explore career opportunities. Participants gained valuable insights into Airbnb's business model, corporate culture, and essential skills required for success in the corporate world, such as adaptability and teamwork. A key highlight was Airbnb's commitment to a mentorship program, pairing each student with a mentor for guidance on career choices and corporate culture. Additionally, students received insights into various job functions within the company and personalized feedback through one-on-one interactions with volunteers. This visit not only established a strong foundation for future collaboration between Airbnb and Help the Blind Foundation (HTBF) but also opened doors for potential internship and job opportunities for students.



Empowering Independence: Spacefelt Application Demonstration

On September 23, 2024, the HTBF Chennai Region Team, including Team Leader **Ms. Gayathri**, EIP Trainer, **Mr. Sakthivel**, and MCC EMET Trainer **Mr. Srikanth**, hosted a demonstration of the innovative Spacefelt application at the MCC Miller Memorial Library. Joined by Spacefelt Representative **Ms. Ishwarya** and MCC Professors, **Dr. Janis** and **Dr. Udhayaraj**, the event focused on enhancing mobility and independence for the visually impaired community. Ms. Ishwarya introduced Spacefelt, highlighting its unique features designed to assist users in navigating public spaces effortlessly.



She elaborated on the app's advanced functionalities, including offline data access, voice note recording, and QR code scanning capabilities, enabling detection of objects or spaces up to three feet away. The interactive session provided attendees with a thorough understanding of the app, and Ms. Ishwarya announced a future mapping initiative aimed at enhancing accessibility within the college library. The Spacefelt app is available on both the Google Play Store and iOS App Store, with a premium version offering additional features. Mr. Sakthivel contributed valuable feedback regarding the low-vision interface, suggesting enhancements for improved usability. Overall, the demonstration was a resounding success, leaving participants inspired and eager to explore how Spacefelt can transform the independence and mobility of visually impaired individuals.

Thank you to all the donors, volunteers, beneficiaries and staff members for your support



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