

PROPOSAL FOR COMPUTER TRAINING

Project Title

Making the educated blind “literate”

Organization Profile

SAKSHAM is a not –for profit Trust established in 2003. It is primarily working since 15 years for the education, rehabilitation and welfare for persons with visual impairment and print disability. The sole aim of the trust is to empower persons belonging to this marginalized section of society through a variety of strategies.

Our Mission is to empower communities by creating multiple opportunities for the underprivileged for sustainable social upliftment, thus enabling them to emerge as significant contributors in India’s growth story.

Our vision is to generate a sensitized and motivated society that acknowledges the value of interdependence and appreciates the abilities of persons with blindness and multiple disabilities and willingly provides equal opportunities for all.

Our organization has implemented various projects for persons with visual impairment, across many regions in the country. We have branches in Punjab, Shimla and UP.

SAKSHAM has a dedicated and capable team, who believe in rising above barriers to achieve the targets in carrying forward all the activities of the organization, by striking a balance between personal experiences and available technology, so that the visually impaired persons benefit the maximum from the existing facilities.

As a National Award winning NGO, SAKSHAM has taken up several projects which are provided to the end-users without extra cost. Following this our specific goals are to -

- Reach out to children with blindness and multiple disabilities outside Delhi. Facilitate them with education & prepare them to integrate into mainstream school/vocational rehabilitation for economic independence and eventually with the society;
- Provide latest assistive devices and technology solutions to persons with visual impairment /blind so that they can continuously upgrade their skills and harness their potentials to lead a better life;
- Provide printed matter in accessible format for the visually impaired persons;
- Continuously work towards creating a barrier free environment including the field of entertainment too.

Our organisation is constantly dedicated to the process of achieving our goals in order to empower persons who are differently abled and; enable them to be independent in life and reintegrate into the mainstream.

Impact assessment of the project activities have been conducted through feedback questionnaires, case studies and follow-up with individuals at their respective locations by SAKSHAM and its partner organizations.

SAKSHAM is already having more than 13 years of experience in providing laptops and other assistive technology solutions/devices along with trainings to many people who are visually impaired in the country.

Executive Summary

India has a large population of visually impaired persons with blindness and low vision who cannot read normal print. A range of assistive technology and material support is required to be provided to them for their social, educational and economic mainstreaming. Our organization is working rigorously to cater to the educational, mobility and day to day needs of persons with visual impairment through its various ongoing projects.

In this project, SAKSHAM would like to focus on empowering and rehabilitating the visually challenged in new age employment opportunities, by making them employability literate, skilled in English communications, mobility & personality development to enable them stand on their own feet and secure a job, support their family and to be a role model for other persons with visual impairment.

SAKSHAM intends to provide quality computer training in batches for visually impaired. It is the greatest form of empowerment which opens up the world to those who are visually challenged which is a world of information, people, jobs, books (print to voice). Computer training will involve training on computer basics, MS office applications, power point, excel, outlook, internet using the NVDA screen reading software which is a talking software that aids the visually impaired to “hear” everything that a sighted person would “read”.

This will be an initiative from SAKSHAM along with the trained Assistive Technology trainers’ team, towards giving quality computer training for visually impaired people who are in the darkness of ignorance and are seeking support from the community to help them lead a dignified life and those who want to continue their studies. Main goal of this course is to make the candidate employable by providing computer knowledge and making them efficient in using computers independently. This will increase the employment opportunities, betterment of existing job and for higher studies.

The duration of the computer training course will be for 3 months with a batch of 10 participants at each geographical site, where SAKSHAM already has channel partners, who in turn will be identifying training participants in their respective areas and will assist in providing accommodation and logistic support for the trainings.

Beneficiary Profile

The channel partners will identify the visually impaired persons from the local community who has adequate knowledge of the latest assistive technology e.g. smart phones and computers. Master trainer from SAKSHAM will train the local trainer for 3 days to enhance his knowledge who will further train the registered beneficiaries for the period of 3 months.

The target community will be persons with visual impairment from various urban and rural areas. They will be identified by the partner organizations who are working in collaboration with SAKSHAM for the empowerment of the persons with visual impairment. SAKSHAM is working for more than 15 years to cater to the educational, mobility and day to day needs of the persons with visual impairment through its various projects PAN India.

Problem statement

There are 135 million visually challenged people in the world and one fourth of them are in India (*et al Srinivasan 2007*). Today there are approx. 20 organizations for visually impaired/blind in whole of India

and out of these, few have resources adequate to care for more than a dozen or two of the thousands of visually impaired/blind children. Men have been slow enough to realise the justice of the visually impaired person's claim to education, employment and all that goes to make 'the good life'. Visually challenged people are in every part of the world. They face a lot of problems in life and they have to depend on others for satisfying their needs.

In today's technology driven world, the main problems that visually impaired persons usually face are

- They have limited knowledge of assistive technology solutions that are available;
- Many have never heard of assistive technological devices including computers;
- Most of them don't even know that they can use computers, and study in schools and colleges due to lack of awareness;
- Many VI cannot even afford to purchase a computer;
- Even if they can afford, they lack training and guidance.

Written operating instructions and other documentation may also be inaccessible if they are not provided in electronic or alternate form (e.g. audio tape or Braille) and even then people may have difficulty accessing graphic or pictorial information included in documentation.

Majority of the persons with visual impairment belong to BPL, poor and lower middle class families and reside in rural areas.

The visually impaired/blind are treated as a burden to their families and society, when; if properly trained can live perfectly normal lives and earn their living.

The present day, person no longer leads his life only on sympathetic donations received in cash or in kind. He wants to join the mainstream of the society and aspires to stand on his own feet with our kind assistance in all possible ways. He has raised himself above this sympathy level and achieved new heights in various fields of commerce and industry. One of the many fields where this visually impaired persons have proven their skills is handling computers.

Proposed Solution

SAKSHAM will organize and conduct 16 computer trainings for visually impaired persons during the period of 3 years. The trainings will be conducted in a batch of 10 participants each from urban and rural areas. The length of each training course will be of 3 months and the trainings will be organized simultaneously in three geographical locations (Maharashtra, Gujrat and Rajasthan) in every quarter. Each participant will be provided with a laptop during the training course. The visually impaired participants and resource persons who are specially trained in accessible technological devices will be identified by our stakeholders/Channel partners at their specific locations for the trainings.

The training will be imparted by a visually impaired person himself, who are from the community itself, using Non Visual Desktop Access (INDO-NVDA) software which converts text to speech.

During this training 160 Visually Impaired/blind persons will be trained on laptop computers in 3 years' time to meet the challenges of employment. It will give the visually impaired/blind of the rural area a time-saving and money-saving opportunity to become technically skilled. Last but not the least to uplift their social status by increasing their technical literacy.

The main objective of the training programme will be to make the visually impaired persons digitally literate to help them gain employment and stand on their own feet.

After the completion of the residential training course each participant will be provided with a laptop.

Key Activities

The Key activities under this project are as follows.

1. Identification and assessment of beneficiaries through channel partners at proposed locations;
2. Provide hands on training to all the participants on laptops using INDO-NVDA software which converts text to speech within the project period of 3 years;
3. Provide laptops (assistive technology device) to 160 visual impairment students after completion of the trainings during the project period of 3 years;
4. Distribution of certificates to all the participants after the completion of the training course of 3 months.

The trainings will be organized along with the channel partners in three geographical locations (Maharashtra, Gujrat and Rajasthan) where the visually impaired/blind students registered with the partners will be identified for the said trainings and master trainers who are trained in computers and INDO-NVDA software, will be provided by SAKSHAM as a resource person for the trainings. The channel partners will also arrange for the accommodation and other logistics for the local participants and the resource persons.

- Total number of trainings planned during the project period of 3 years – 16;
- Total length of each training course – 3 months;
- Batch size during each training – 10 participants;
- Total number of visually impaired persons trained within 3 years – 160;
- Geographical locations where the trainings will be conducted – Pune, Bhubaneswar and Jaipur;

Apart from the above mentioned trainings and participants, SAKSHAM will also identify and conduct additional trainings for those visually impaired persons who already have a laptop computer but have not received any trainings.

Outcomes of the Project

The computer training courses for Visually Impaired in their nearby locality will surely solve their problems to a great extent. Gradual Increase in the number of training courses will enable our organisation to prepare a large number of educated visually Impaired/blind to be computer literate, which will.

- Help Visually Impaired persons to become aware of the technology world at an early stage;
- Increase the level of confidence and independence. Through these computers the Visually Impaired will be able to do many tasks on their own, such as reading their books, completing their own assignments, gaining new awareness through internet and preparing for exams, payment of online bills and reservation of cabs, etc.;
- Prepare for lectures and make their own notes independently in their classes;
- Gain employable skills at an appropriate age;
- Connect to online libraries such as Bookshare and Sugamaya Pustakalaya and avail books of their interests and their subjects free of cost;
- Seeking employment;
- Prepare for competitive examinations;

- Stay in touch with their friends and families through social media through computers;
- Share experiences to help and learn when they meet in person;
- Learn and remain informed about new developments from home;
- Pursue higher education;
- Lead a meaningful and productive life, thus become a contributing member of the society.

The outcomes of the project will be measured through a feedback format, which SAKSHAM has already developed for the training participants. The local channel partners will be identified at each geographical locations to do a regular follow-up with each individuals who has completed the 3 months training course for their feedbacks and progress after the training through phone calls, personal contacts and case studies.

In addition, the following techniques will be used for the assessment

1. Weekly class presentations by 2 participants each from every batch on the topic/content covered in order to assess their level of understanding at every stage and enhance their confidence;
2. Monthly tests of participants to assess the effectiveness of the training programme on a regular basis;
3. Documenting detailed case studies of 2 participants from each geographical location after 3 months of completion of their training in order to evaluate the long-term impact of the intervention on their skills, productivity, employability, education, etc.

SAKSHAM will continue to establish contacts with the training participants for their feedback as a follow-up.

The outcome of the project will be measured through follow-up of each individual's progress for six months through phone calls, email communication and help line. Project reports and case studies will be prepared simultaneously.

A small amount will be collected from the participants from the community as a subsidy for the laptops. The purpose of providing subsidy and taking a part of the cost of the computer device from the participant.

- Helps the Visually Impaired person/participants understand the importance of the device bought;
- Helps them utilize the device to its maximum advantage by gaining a sense of ownership.

How subsidy helps and reduces the key risks?

- People may not value or utilise the computer given free of cost or their family persons make use of it. So the basic purpose to help persons start using technology goes wasted. It is important to make people understand the importance of the devices given and the training given to them;
- Through this kind of component, the persons who are really interested and value the computer and knowledge given will be given right opportunity;
- This will create a healthy and positive environment and more persons will get interested and will come forward for such trainings.

Budget

Total funds required for the project (in INR Lakhs) - INR. 50, 00,000 (Rupees Fifty Lakhs Only)

