

# •• Help the Blind • Foundation

**PIONEER IN UNIVERSITY EDUCATION FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED**



## *Education, Mobility, Employability Training (EMET) Annual Report 2019-20*

There is no better way to thank for your sight than helping someone in the dark – **Helen Keller**

## HTBF: the Backdrop

India is home to the world's largest number of visually-impaired people. Of the 39 million people across the globe who are visually-impaired, an estimated 15 million are in India. Reports indicate that around 1.8 million might be in the college going age.

Given poor educational and health facilities, it is the poorest among the visually impaired who suffer the greatest. Our efforts are focused in reaching this socio-economic group, many of whom migrate to cities, where colleges provide better facilities for the visually impaired.

During an early morning walk, Mr. D.K. Patel, retired Senior Economist, HSBC, Hong Kong, entered the premises of St. Louis School for the Blind in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. He was deeply impressed by the energy and enthusiasm of the students of the school. He then wondered why many visually-impaired people are unemployed despite their high capabilities, and felt deeply that college education is a basic and minimum need to help them realise their full potential and integrate with society at large.

Research showed that integrated education, rather than education in segregated schools of the visually-impaired, prepared them better for employability in the real world. This fact prompted the late Mr. D.K. Patel to start Help the Blind Foundation with specific focus on higher education for the visually-impaired who wanted to study in integrated colleges.

## About HTBF

Help the Blind Foundation (HTBF), a registered Charitable Trust, has been functioning since 2010. We are deeply committed to university education for the visually-impaired.

- **Our Vision:** To successfully elevate the economic status of the visually impaired and improve their image in the eyes of the society.
- **Our Mission:** To achieve our vision of providing visually impaired students access to higher education and enable them to get jobs in today's modern economy.

The uniqueness of HTBF is that it is one among a few NGOs in India focussed on University education for the visually-impaired. The foundation is managed by a team of 8 trustees, comprising experienced bankers, academics and professionals, on a voluntary basis. It is also supported by 40+ additional volunteers, making it a largely volunteer-run organization.

## Our Objective

The main objective of HTBF is to ensure that every visually impaired student in India gets college education. In this respect, we provide financial support for college-bound visually-impaired students pursuing graduate courses from reputed colleges in an integrated education system. We meet our objective through a sponsorship program, where eligible students are selected and provided financial support to meet the cost of their tuition and hostel accommodation. This helps with employment, as we provide both skills development training as well as employment to trainers. This in turn leads to financial independence, and hence the social inclusion of the visually-impaired.

## Our Impact

Since 2010, the year of its inception, more than 1659 students have graduated under our sponsorship programme. For the academic year 2019-20, HTBF has awarded financial sponsorships for education to the tune of Rs.275 lakhs to 2400 students in more than 225 colleges, covering 12 States.

With a view to improving the employability of its beneficiaries, HTBF launched the EMET (Education, Mobility, Employability Training) to supplement its scholarship programme.

Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see – Mark Twain



## An Introduction to EMET

Today, one marvels at the sheer number of things that technology has made possible, starting from smartphones to the wonders of artificial intelligence! Technology and the expanding digital world have also come as a boon to the visually-impaired; it may come as a surprise to many that a visually-impaired person can be employed in over 180 job roles, all thanks to technology!



Keyboard orientation training



Employability session at Chennai



Mobility training

Additionally, visually-impaired individuals can perform jobs across all clusters of careers, including marketing, human resources, business management and administration, health science, law, agriculture, finance and more. In the light of this, the HTBF has helped facilitate the process of integrating the visually-impaired with the mainstream by using a special skills training programme called E-MET or the Education, Mobility and Employability Training.

Conducted in select colleges across India, EMET is aimed at making the visually-impaired employable. It is a 2-year program in skills-training conducted at select colleges, and offers courses in:

- Computer usage
- English Communication
- Mobility
- Analytical ability
- Interpersonal relationships

The goal of the EMET programme is to empower the visually-impaired by placing them in productive jobs to help achieve their financial independence and social inclusion. EMET is presently conducted by 21 Trainers in Bangalore, Chennai, Coimbatore, Delhi, Indore, Pune and Varanasi for 500 students studying in 17 colleges.

## Our Partners

Our mission to empower the visually-impaired by providing them with scholarships for higher education as well as imparting skills-training to them, would not be possible without the help of our generous donors, including our partners and sponsors. We wish to express our heartfelt gratitude to them.

Walking with a friend in the dark is better than walking alone in the light - Helen Keller



## Financial Sponsors



The CEO of Cognizant Foundation, Rajashree addressing students during the EMET inauguration at Chennai.

Our financial sponsors include:

- Cognizant Foundation; figuring among India's top IT companies, Cognizant funds most of the EMET programs across 7 regions.
- Canara Bank
- Majestic Exports

## Knowledge Partner

Enable India, Bangalore, is presently our only Knowledge Partner. Enable India assists us by providing the curriculum, improving trainer's knowledge as well as certifying the trainers themselves.



EMET Inauguration

HTBF has been engaging with Enable India as a knowledge partner for EMET. Says Moses Gorrepathi, Program Director, Enable India, "The partnership between Enable India as Knowledge Partner and HTBF regarding EMET has been long-

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term. The transparency about the programme with the kind of trust built between Enable India and HTBF is the highlight of the relationship. There is the flexibility to express one's views openly. Importantly, the value systems of the organizations are very good. And the partnership has evolved well. As far as the future prospects of the EMET are concerned, there is potential to work with more colleges. We can go to areas that are a lot needier. Also, we need to work towards the holistic development of the students."

EMET has also enabled close interaction at the ground level between HTBF and Enable India. HTBF has won praise for its efficiency, motivation and organizational skills.

'It has been a wonderful journey with EMET. EMET is a very good initiative, and what's commendable is that HTBF has made it both accessible and affordable. Students do not have to move across different states to obtain the training. What's also admirable is that the training is designed such that it takes into consideration individual needs, such as the level of vision impairment, etc. The values of both HTBF and Enable India are the same, and the partnership is really good. HTBF identifies strengths very well. HTBF volunteers are a huge strength of the organization, and I think the organization will go global in a couple of years. There's also been a good effort to sensitize all stakeholders through the process of mainstreaming the education for the visually-impaired. This helps to change the image of the visually-impaired in the minds of parents, college teachers, hostel authorities, students, and even the immediate neighbourhood", says Sandesh, Project Specialist, Enable India.

## Training Partners

Our Training Partners conduct the training on our behalf. They include: Samarthanam Trust, Delhi and Poona Blind Men's Association (PBMA), Pune.

## Infrastructure Support

Infrastructure support is provided by the following organizations:

- Sankya Vidya Foundation, Bangalore - supported by the Rotary Club, Bangalore, the Sankya foundation provides refurbished laptops and desktops.
- CNSI, Chennai - assisted us by providing us several desktops
- Book share.org

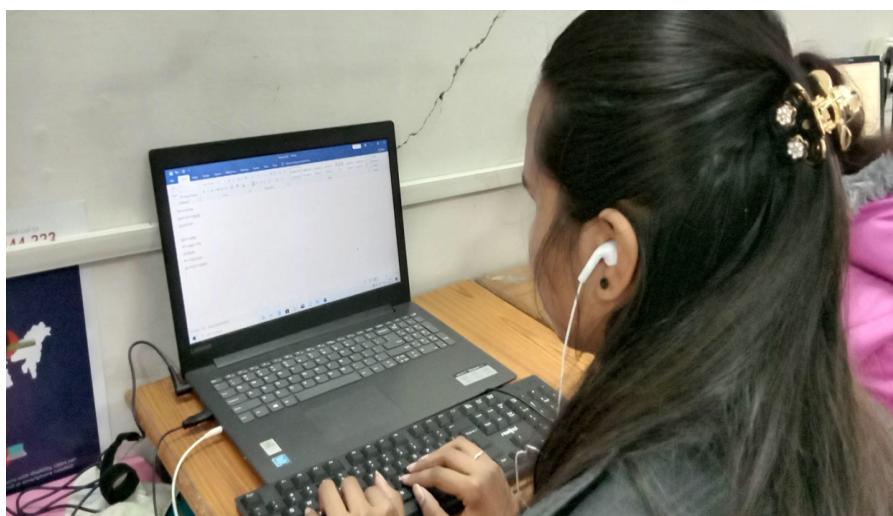
We wish to express our heartfelt gratitude to our partners and sponsors, who have made the mission of HTBF possible.



## Online Training

The COVID-19 outbreak caused us to explore new ways of training, and subsequently, we started the online training programme from the last week of March 2020.

As a majority of EMET students possess mobile phones, we quickly started intimating them about the online classes by messaging and calling them personally. Meanwhile, we also started looking for an audio-conferencing platform, to allow even students without smartphones to participate in the online training.



## How the EMET Online Training Works

As virtual classrooms in general are a distant dream for even the non-disabled/sighted, we have to take a moment to appreciate ourselves for making them a reality for a person with vision impairment, thanks to current technology. Technology has enabled all of us, our passionate trainers and students to adapt to the new and challenging environment. Thanks also to our funders for making sure the project runs smoothly even in these hard times.

Trainers can also monitor their classes using a tool enabling them to know how many students are participating in the call, who is speaking etc, along with options to mute all, mute particular students (if they're noisy), dismiss someone from class, etc. Similar to the traditional classroom, a particular time is fixed for all the EMET centers (after consultation with trainers and students), and a conferencing room is allotted for an hour and a half. Trainers host the call; all the students join the call using the unique passcode shared with them, and the training begins.

Unlike traditional methods, this model of training cannot be the lecture mode, but rather a very interactive classroom, where after each explanation provided, all the students are asked if they understood the topic. Questions on the topics are asked in general, as well as specifically to some students to encourage the less expressive students, and also to make sure all the students are involved, and at the same time, to check if all are in line.

Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see – Mark Twain



## Regional Report - Bangalore



In the Bangalore region, the EMET is conducted at the **Government First grade college**.

The college, situated in Vijayanagar, Bengaluru commenced operations in 1985-86, and has grown to provide quality education to over 2800 students in various streams. The college, affiliated to Bangalore University, is accredited with grade 'B' by NAAC with 2.72 CGPA. The institution is extremely proud of its well-equipped, perfect and unique enabling unit - 'Chetna'- the only one of its kind among government colleges in Karnataka. This unit plays the dual role of empowering visually and physically challenged students to face the challenges of the real world.



English training at Vijayanagar college

*"I'm proud of the EMET as I learnt Computers, English, Mobility and Employability training – skills that were needed for acquiring a job. I also found the mix of skills acquired through the training to be good." Varalakshmi, Student, Government First Grade College, Vijayanagar, Bangalore*

### Training Impact

Some highlights regarding the EMET training in these regions are as follows:

1. 70% of students have basic keyboard orientation and 66 % can comprehend the screen reader.
2. 50% of students can type 15-20 words or above, and at least 10-15 words per minute.
3. 45% of students can frame simple sentences in English without making many mistakes.
4. 55% of students are aware of at least 20 different job roles.
5. 45% of students are able to use the cane successfully.



## Regional Report - Varanasi



**Banaras Hindu University (BHU)** is an internationally reputed institution of learning situated in the holy city of Varanasi in India. Founded by the great nationalist leader, Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya, it is also the largest in terms of campus size as well as student strength. The university has produced many great freedom fighters and builders of modern India, and has contributed immensely to the progress of the nation through a large number of renowned scholars, artists, scientists and technologists who have graced its portals.



Computer Training at BHU

*“The EMET teachers are helpful. They teach us whatever they know. They impart knowledge that can benefit us, even if the same is outside of the scope of the syllabus. We don’t face any type of problem.” Nazneen, Student, BHU*

### Training Impact

There are presently 120 Visually Impaired students who obtain scholarships from HTBF in BHU. There are 75 candidates in the EMET programme. Also, the students who showed less interest initially and were not regular, got motivated and became regular in attending class after seeing the improvement in their friends.

Some highlights of the EMET training in these regions are as follows:

- 22% of students have basic keyboard orientation, and can comprehend the screen reader.
- 15% of students can type 15-20 words or above per min, and at least 10-15 words per minute.
- 12% of students can frame simple sentences in English without making many mistakes.
- 5% of students are aware of at least 20 different job roles.
- 26% of students are able to use the cane successfully.





## Regional Report - Coimbatore



At Coimbatore, the EMET training was carried out for visually challenged students from three colleges - **Government Arts college, Ramakrishna College, and Bharathiar University.**

Bharathiar university aims to enable students to contribute more effectively towards establishing an equitable social, economic and secular ideal of our nation.



Signature training at DCL, Coimbatore

*“My dream and goal for the future is to become an IAS officer. And yes, the E MET training will help me achieve the same, especially as it helps develop language.” Shivachandran, Ramakrishna College, Coimbatore*

### Training Impact

The end of the first year of EMET has seen a good response in terms of the progress of the students of these colleges. Some highlights regarding the training impact in this region are as follows:

- 92% of students have basic keyboard orientation and can comprehend the screen reader.
- 51% of students can type 15-20 words per min and 10 to 15 wpm.
- 45% of students can frame simple sentences in English without making many mistakes.
- 76% of students are aware of at least 20 different job roles.
- 58% of students are able to use the cane successfully.



## Regional Report - Chennai



EMET is conducted at the **Queen Mary's College and Presidency College** in Chennai.

Presidency College is an arts, law and science college in the city of Chennai in Tamil Nadu, India, and is among the oldest government arts colleges in India. Queen Mary's College is a government-run college in Chennai, India. It is the first women's college in the city and the third oldest women's college in India.



Company visit - Presidency college, Chennai

*"What I like most about the EMET programmes are the different types of workshops one is exposed to. I'm really impressed with them". **Shreeharan,**  
**Student, Chennai***

### Training Impact

Some highlights of the EMET training in this region are as follows:

- 46 % of students have basic keyboard orientation, and can comprehend the screen reader.
- 15 % of students can type 15-20 words or above, and 15 % at least 10-15 words per minute.
- 24 % of students can frame simple sentences in English without making many mistakes.
- 32 % students are aware of maximum 5 jobs that can be performed by a visually impaired person.

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## Regional Report - Indore



EMET is carried out in two colleges in Indore: **Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee College and Mata Jijabai Girls College.**

Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee Arts & Commerce College, accredited grade “A” by NAAC, aims to facilitate meaningful education to socially and economically backward classes by taking into account factors such as social needs, access, equity, and quality. The Mata Jijabai Girls College is a multi-faculty autonomous college for girls. The college plays a stellar role in imparting knowledge to women at a minimal cost.



Mata Jijabai EMET Training Lab

*“The teachers have a good way of teaching, and you don’t get bored. The teaching is also clear and easy to understand. The teachers are willing to explain things even 10 times, and hence there’s no need to revise.” **Rakhi, Student, EMET, Indore***

***The World Bank paid a visit to the Mata Jijabai college, and appreciated the EMET program there.***

### Training Impact

Some highlights as regards the EMET training impact in this region are as follows:

- 96% of the students have basic keyboard orientation and can comprehend the screen reader.
- 7 % of the students type 15-20 words or above, and at least 10-15 words per minute.
- 60 % of the students can frame simple sentences in English without making many mistakes.
- 30 % of the students are aware of at least 2 different job roles.
- 20 % of the students are able to use the cane successfully.



## Regional Report - Delhi



EMET is carried out in Delhi in **Daulat Ram College, Kirori Mal College, Satyawati College and Miranda House College.**

Daulat Ram College is one of the leading colleges in the University of Delhi. Miranda House has a special place among the women's colleges of the University of Delhi. The science departments at Miranda House are part of the Star Status awarded by the Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India. Training in Satyawati College commenced in June'20.



Candidate using MS Word during a Training session.

*"I used to hesitate while speaking English earlier, but the Role Play sessions have helped develop my communication skills. The EMET also gives me sound knowledge about employability." **Poorva, Student, Miranda House, Delhi***

### Training Impact

Some highlights of the EMET training in this region are as follows:

- 85% of students have basic keyboard orientation and can comprehend the screen reader.
- 75% of students type 15-20 words or above per min, and at least 10-15 words.
- 73% of students can frame simple sentences in English without making many mistakes.
- 60% of students are aware of at least 20 different job roles.
- 90% of students are able to use the cane successfully.





## Regional Report - Pune



EMET is carried out in 2 colleges in Pune: **SP college and Modern college.**

Accredited with A+ Grade (3.70 CGPA) by NAAC, Sir Parashurambhau College (S. P. College), is one of the most prestigious colleges in Pune, India. Modern College of Arts, Science and Commerce, is an undergraduate and postgraduate college located in Shivajinagar, Pune. Established in the year 1970, Modern College was awarded Grade 'A+' in the third cycle of NAAC Accreditation.



*“The EMET teachers are very good; they are one in a lakh. Words are simply not enough to describe them. They are very friendly and helpful. Vivek Sir treats us like friends; we feel free to discuss our problems with him.”*  
**Shoukat Gavandi, Student, SP College, Pune**

Some highlights of EMET training in these colleges are as follows:

- 75% of the students have basic keyboard orientation, and can comprehend the screen reader.
- 25% of the students can type 15-20 words or above and 50% at least 10-15 per min.
- 35% of the students can frame simple sentences in English without making many mistakes.
- 35% of the students are aware of at least 20 different job roles.
- 100% of the students are able to use the cane successfully.



## Feedback about EMET

HTBF has been keenly assessing the impact of EMET and seeking feedback from participants, knowledge partners and educators. We are delighted to note that the programme has not come a moment too soon, and has been given the green thumb by our beneficiaries across the colleges where we are operating the programme. It is also heartening to note that beneficiaries are willing to recommend the EMET to their peers. Here is a sampling of the feedback received:



"I find the EMET classes very interesting. In fact, I like everything about the EMET. I can't think of any suggestions on how to improve the same." **Fathima, Student, Chennai**



"My dream and goal is to join the IAS or work for IT companies, and I feel that both the computer training as well as the English training I receive via the EMET will prove very useful in helping me achieve my goal and become successful." **Shreeharan, Student, Presidency College, Chennai**



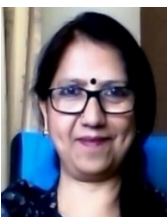
"Speaking of the impact of the EMET program, some people who didn't even touch computers learned much about computers. Most girls are from rural/interior regions and there's a good improvement in both knowledge of Computers as well as English in 60-70% of the girls." **Bila, Professor, EMET, Indore region**



"Today, more and more companies are coming forward to hire Persons with Disability. The challenge is to supply persons with disability who are job-ready, and this is where the significance of the EMET comes in." **Moses Gorrepathi, Program Director, Enable India.**



"I dream of educating lakhs of visually impaired students in the future. The EMET, I'm confident, will help me achieve this goal." **Varalakshmi, Student, Government First Grade College, Vijayanagar, Bangalore**



"The training that EMET provides in Mobility, Computer Knowledge, Soft Skills and Communicative English, is the need of the hour. As a result of the training, the students are empowered and becoming confident." **Dr. Lalithamba, Coordinator, Government First Grade, College, Bangalore**





"My dream and goal for the future is to become a Professor, and I feel that the Computer training I receive via EMET will help me in this regard. I appreciate the fact that the teachers impart knowledge that can benefit us, even if the same is outside of the scope of the syllabus." **Nazneen, Student, BHU**



"The EMET teachers are very kind, friendly, and answer doubts as many times as we want. The teaching is clear and easy to understand." **Shaktivel, Government Arts College, Coimbatore**



"The teaching is clear and easy to understand; examples are provided. Jagan sir gives demonstrations, which are an easy way to learn. The computer training has improved my typing speed. I can presently type 25-30 words a minute. Mobile Apps like Be My Eyes, Google Text, Envision, etc. have really helped" **Shivachandran, Ramakrishna College, Coimbatore**



"Yes, I do believe that the EMET can help me successfully adjust in the world of sighted people; Computer software like the NVDA help the Visually Impaired to work on Computers like sighted people," **Rakhi, Student, Mata Jijabhai College, Indore**



"I have really enjoyed the EMET classes. It's been wonderful. We started things right from scratch. The English lessons too, began from the basics, but by now, people can have a simple conversation in English, while they may have had poor prior knowledge of the subject earlier," **Poorva, Student, Miranda House, Delhi**



"The classes are never boring. We joke and enjoy our classes. We don't know how the hour passes. The subjects taught are useful; for e.g., today there isn't much you can do without computer knowledge. I'd recommend the EMET to others. I'd tell them that government jobs are difficult, and the EMET training will help fetch jobs in the private sector. If your English and Computer Skills are good, it will fetch you a job." **Shoukat Gavandi, Student, SP College, Pune**



## Conclusion

HTBF launched the EMET (Education, Mobility, and Employability Training) to supplement its scholarship programme, with a view to improving the employability of its beneficiaries. As discussed, the EMET presently spans 17 institutions across 7 cities and benefits 500 students.

We would like to conclude by specially thanking our trainers, partners, sponsors and volunteers for making the EMET possible. It is due to your heartfelt support and cooperation that the EMET is a reality today. EMET has come as a boon to visually-impaired students, helping them continue their learning remotely, especially during this pandemic.

For the academic year 2019-20, HTBF has awarded financial sponsorships for education to 2400 students in more than 225 colleges. We hope to enrol as many of them as possible in future EMET programmes. We hope that the EMET program will help them get into their dream jobs, and enable them to integrate with the mainstream. We look forward to the continued support of all stakeholders in our endeavours, and seek their continued and earnest support of the EMET programme in the coming years. Thank you.

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