VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION / EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME GENERATION ACTIVITY (IGA)

FOR PERSONS WITH DEAFBLINDNESS

CONCEPTUALISED AND DEVELOPED BY

The Spastics Society of Tamil Nadu, Deafblind Regional Centre for South (DbRC - South)

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# ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

# THE SPASTICS SOCIETY OF TAMILNADU (SPASTN)

Celebrating Diversity & Enriching

Lives.....with Dignity

The Spastics Society of Tamil Nadu (SPASTN) is a community based organization that endeavours to be a centre for excellence that empowers the well-being and inclusion of people with disability to achieve their fullest potential. At the core of everything that SPASTN undertakes, is the passionate belief in the dignity of human life. It is for these underpinning values, SPASTN champions for the rights of disabled persons, the right to life, to information, to education, to health, to employment, to social security, to recreation leading to full participation.

# SENSE INTERNATIONAL INDIA (SII)

Sense India founded in 1997 and formally known as Sense International India. This is the first and only national level non-profit organization that works for persons with Deafblindness throughout India. Sense India carries out this huge task effortlessly by partnering with likeminded organizations that work with persons with single disabilities. As on date, Sense India is reaching out to 78000+ (direct - 14,594; indirect - 63,500+) persons with Deafblindness through 59 partners in 23 states and enable children with Deafblindness to receive education through Government's Samagra Shiksha scheme in the country. Sense India also extended its technical support to develop services for persons with Deafblindness in Bangladesh and Nepal to provide quality services for persons with Deafblindness.

"Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence."

- Helen Keller

#  ACNOWLEDGEMENT

The Spastics Society of Tamil Nadu is the Deafblind Regional Centre for the South (DbRC - South). As DbRC-Southern India we reach out and engage more grass root partner organizations to build their capacities based on the needs of persons with deafblindness so that this could lead to establishing more services to meet their needs across Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana in South India supported by Sense India and funded by Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiative (APPI).

## Achievements & Role of DbRC - South

* Number of potential grass root organizations identified across South - 50
* Conducted Southern Regional trainings on deafblindness and Network meetings to build the capacities of the newly identified as well existing partner organizations across south.
* Conducted screening and clinical assessment of vision and hearing in the newly identified potential organizations with the support of Deafblind State Centre's (DbSC's) to identify and extend services to high risk persons with deafblindness.
* Conducted online RCI approved Southern Regional trainings on Deafblindness
* Developing awareness materials on deafblindness in Regional languages of south (Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, & Kannada) and in English.

# INTRODUCTION

Deafblindness is a combination of sight and hearing loss that affects a person's ability to communicate, access information and get around. Being deafblind is recognised as a unique disability in its own right. It does not necessarily mean that a person is totally deaf or totally blind- most individuals who are deafblind have some residual sight and/or hearing. Everybody with a combined sight and hearing impairment connects, communicates and experiences the world differently. The approach to support will vary, but with the right support, a person with deafblindness can lead a connected and fulfilled life. Young people with multiple-sensory impairments and other complex disabilities are less likely to be in employment. They are often isolated and socially excluded by their communities, exacerbated by lack of engagement with livelihoods activities, and resulting in a poorer quality of life. Increased livelihood opportunities can contribute to economic empowerment but importantly, also promote increased social inclusion and wellbeing of individuals and also their families.

This manual has been developed in regional languages of south for better understanding of the parents and rehabilitation professionals (team) to guide the young adults with deafblindness on the aspects of vocational rehabilitation services, employability in context with career awareness, career exploration and career preparation, employment models and developing adult livelihood skills with case studies.

## Vocational Rehabilitation

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is a set of services offered to people with disabilities. These services are essentially focused on enabling them to attain and access work related skills, resources, attitudes and expectations to be able to compete in interview process, get a job and keep a job. A team of professionals, along with parents and care givers come together to enable children, youth and adults with disabilities (PwD) to implement transitional planning.

* Vocational Rehabilitation
* Special Educators
* Vocational Counsellors
* Individuals who can help PwDb
* Vocational Rehabilitation Team
* Orientation & Mobility Trainers
* Parents
* Job Coach
* Occupational Therapists

## Vocational training for persons with deafblindness

Vocational training refers to instructional programs or courses that focus on the skills required for a particular job function or trade.

As students with deafblindness grow to adulthood, they need to be equipped with skills that will make them employable, as well as more independent. Providing employment for persons with deafblindness is very important because

provides opportunities self-sufficiency and improvement in their living condition.

## Objective of Vocational training for Persons with Deafblindness

The aim of vocational training for persons with disabilities is to enable them to live with dignity, self-esteem and to contribute to the community to their best.

## Pre-Vocational training

It's never too early to encourage a child with deafblindness to think about how his or her dreams and interests could translate into a career. Pre-Vocational training helps young students with deafblindness to lay the groundwork for fulfilling careers before placing them in vocational training. Pre-vocational, Vocational and life-skills training begin early in school (special or inclusive) so as to enhance the employability of persons with deafblindness.

1. Services
2. Comprehensive Vocational Assessment
3. Training
4. Job Placement
5. Support

## Pre - Vocational training helps

* Students learn about different career possibilities and they learn about themselves.
* Define their goals and create a plan to achieve them.
* Identify their particular skills, abilities and interests.
* Interact with and learn from people who know firsthand the challenges they face.
* Find out how to communicate their values, needs and preferences to others.
* Find out how to get the resources they need in school and beyond.
* Discover ways to overcome vision and hearing related challenges in the workplace.
* Try out the latest in assistive technology.
* Learn how to write a resume and a cover letter.
* Field trips to work sites for more exposure, new ideas and explore career options.
* Build their interviewing skills.

## Role of Assistive Technology {AT) and devices for Persons with Deafblindness (PwDb)

Assistive technology (AT) is a broad term that refers to hardware and software that enable persons with deafblindness to engage and complete the tasks efficiently. Many children with deafblindness in our country still have limited access to prevocational and vocational training, while there are others who receive vocational training that lack necessary assistive technologies.

## Importance of AT for PwDb

* Communication
* Independence
* Education
* Vocation
* Access Information
* Socialization

## Examples of AT & devices useful for PwDb

* Refreshable Braille Display(RBD)
* Enabling Switches
* Good Vibes App
* Embossers/ Fusers/ Thermoform
* Large Point Keyboard
* Braille keyboard
* Magnification software
* Mobile phones with Braille Display
* Zoomex or Open Book Software

Need based adaptations like scissors/punching machine/stapler fixed in a board, tactile ruler, measuring tape, Alarm with Vibrators, talking calculator etc. also enable PwDb to complete the task

## Employability - Career awareness/ development and exploration of competencies

Employability skills refer to knowledge, skills and attitude which is necessary to succeed in employment at all levels of employment and in all levels of employment and in all sectors. Employability skills are generic in nature rather than job specific hard skills and cut across all types of sectors. Persons with deafblindness require training on work readiness skills to increase employability skills. The training has to encompass skills such as:

A. HARD SKILLS

* Technical
* information, Communication Technology

B. SOFT SKILLS

* Communication
* Life Skills
* Team Work
* Problem Solving

C. SKILLS FOR EMPLOYMENT

* Self-Employment
* Job Seeking Skills

* Hard skills and Soft skills

Training persons with deafblindness include competencies that comprises of both hard and soft skills.

* Hard skills involve application of knowledge and work - skills relevant to the employment / job specific skills.
* Soft skills are traits, abilities and skills that pertain to personality, attitude and behaviour rather than formal or technical skills.

### Generic skills

These are core skills which are transportable across different workplace. The elements of generic skills largely comprise of:

* Basic or fundamental skills - literacy, using numbers and technology.
* People related skills - communication, relating with others, team work and customer focus.
* Personal skills and attributes - attendance, punctuality, dress and hygiene, resourcefulness, responsible and flexible to changes/transition at work.
* Conceptual / thinking skills - problem solving, collecting and organizing information and planning.

## Career Education

### Career Awareness

* Career development is a life-long process that starts early which begins with career awareness
* Gain an understanding about self-regarding their skills, abilities, interest, values and talents
* Know about various types of occupations that they see around them.
* Develop a realistic understanding of the barriers to their participation in work and career.

### Career Exploration

* Career exploration is one way to find out about multiple career options. Career exploration and decision making go together and includes exploring about the meaning of work and career
* Vocational team carries out formal assessment of skills, aptitudes and interest for transition planning. Using the assessment data engage with persons with deafblindness towards career decision making process referring it to job market.

### Career Preparation

* Career preparation and work based learning (volunteer work) helps to form and develop aspirations and to make choices from what they see and learn.
* Onsite training, or on the job training or work experience programs or internships exposure are ways for persons with Deafblindness to demonstrate skills in positive attitude, stamina, flexibility, relating with others, plan, organize and prioritize work.

## Models of Employment

* Sheltered Employment
* Supported Employment
* Enclave model or clustered placement- Small Group
* Mobile Work Crew
* Competitive Employment

### Supported Employment

Sheltered workshop is defined as a work facility for persons with deafblindness where skills training and work takes place without the pressure of competitive employment. It provides and enables the social and occupational integration, and rehabilitation of persons with deafblindness.

These workshops are self-contained units where they carry out sub-contract work. It allows the deafblind persons to practice job or tasks where processes are broken into simple steps. The work they do consists of projects and small contract work secured by service providers from various organizations to provide real-life work environment so their future employment prospects can be improved.

### Supported Employment - Co-worker engagement & sensitization

Supported employment is evidence based model and is also called Individualized Placement and Support Model. In this model people with Deafblindness seek and obtain competitive employment in sectors they desire to work in and a job coach supports them to learn how to perform tasks in accordance with employers/industry specifications. This model uses a partnership strategy, supporting both the employee and the employer. Job support solutions and accommodations include:

* Job matching through intensive vocational profiling
* In-work support
* Employer engagement
* Career development and life-long learning

### Enclave model or clustered placement - Small Group

This model of employment is intended for individuals whose needs cannot be met in the open employment, but can benefit from closely supported training and ongoing support from job coach to make a successful adjustment to the job. In this model, 4 to 8 persons with deafblindness work in a community based organization or small/medium enterprise with a full time supervisor who will train and mentor them. It is a group supported employment approach in organizations or industrial setting. Garden maintenance, environmental cleaning of service apartments or laundry services etc., are some of the tasks undertaken by a group of persons with deafblindness.

### Mobile work crew

A small crew of persons with Deafblindness works as a unit and operates as a self-contained business unit generating employment for them by selling a service. The crew works at several locations within the community, under the supervision of job coach or parent as mentor. The type of work frequently includes masseurs, janitorial (cleaning, repairing and maintenance work) or grounds keeping, servicing apartments, recycling services etc. The mobile crew may also include non - persons with disabilities in the crew.

### Competitive Employment

A traditional approach here the where staff provide time limited services to students which may include assistance in locating a job, matching the job to a prepared or job-ready individual, short term training, and support.

## Assessment

Assessments and evaluations should occur across a variety of natural environments (home, community, school) to determine student's functional abilities (communication, self-care, vision and hearing, orientation and mobility). For students who are Deafblind, new places and people can be frightening and confusing. Observing and interacting with students in real life settings provide a great deal of functional information.

Clinical assessments often address discrete areas of functioning (e.g., ophthalmological, audiological, orthopaedic, low vision, physical health) and are often conducted in a specialized environment designed for that purpose. Clinical assessments may be very helpful in determining specific needs for therapy or for the prescription of medical treatment or aids and devices.

Functional assessments are both student centred and family centred. The assessors select activities and environments in which students can demonstrate their competence to the best of their abilities. They focus on the student's present and future needs. Functional assessments provide a true picture of the student's capabilities and are the foundation to determine educational priorities and to design instruction.

Functional assessment should focus on the following areas of student learning:

* Communication & Technology
* Social competence
* Functional vision & hearing
* Daily living skills
* Reading and writing
* Leisure and recreation
* Motor skills
* Orientation and mobility
* Vocational skills and interests

### Pre - Vocational Assessment Tool (PVAT) Tool:

PVAT tool helps in assessing the following skills:

* Generic skills like (Personal, Domestic, Social, Safety, Academic and Community orientation) are assessed.
* Work related skills like Time management, dress code, adaptability, Quality of work, following instructions, attention span during the work, etc., are assessed
* Pre - requisite skills required for vocational training depending on the type of trade chosen by the person.

## Assessment and modifications of workstations

Assessment of office ergonomics and workstation analysis is the first step to enable persons with deafblindness to access work place. Person, environment and occupation is a model that helps to analyse, hypothesize and identify solutions to increase occupational performance to optimize dynamic relationship amongst people, their occupations/roles and the environments in which they live, work and play. Work place assessment must be carried by a professional who basically understands work, motion and time study. Comprehensive assessment and workstation modification should promote fairness, inclusion and opportunities for Persons with deafblindness

1. Environment
2. Occupation
3. Person

### Key components of workstation to look at are:

* Lighting - good lighting across the travel pathway where the employee is likely to move around such as pantry, lunch room, toilet, conference room, etc
* Draughts - it means the gush of cool air either from the open window or air conditioner
* Seating - Chairs should support lower back, of appropriate height, reach ranges and distance to the table of the person is a wheel chair user, the tables have to be adjustable.
* Spacing - Assistive devices need adequate space for placement and provision has to be made. If the worker uses electrical or electronic equipment additional electrical socket provision has to be made and provisioned in a way it is within reach range. All circulatory pathways have to be free of obstructions and within reach.
* Flooring - Examine the floor area to ensure they are non-slip. Any floor changes have to have treads, hand rails, bevels and detectable warnings. Colour contrast on walls and floors has to be examined.
* Doors - Examine if provision of kick plates, glass doors with contrast tapes and wooden doors have viewing panel.

## Income Generation Activity (IGA) / Setting up enterprises

Since open employment opportunities for persons with deafblindness are not possible for ALL, opportunities are limited to earn a livelihood, it is important to look at self-employment as an alternative potential option. Persons who start their own business or enterprise are self-employed. Enterprise can be broadly defined as a project or initiative where a person provides a product or service to make an income or profit (economic gain), or for the benefit of the individual or community (social gain). Entrepreneurs are those involved in developing an initiative, product or service. Self-employment as a career option is being taken up by more and more persons with deafblindness.

## BENEFITS OF IGA

* Increased range of choices
* Income generation
* Community engagement, inclusion and integration
* Enhanced self-esteem
* Improved quality of life
* Growing social networks

Even supported (parent) self-employment is a practical option for persons with Deafblindness. To promote the enterprise potential of the Persons with deafblindness the guiding value has to be equality, inclusion, and active participation of the individual and community. Sustainable business supports can be built if volunteers act as natural support and mentor to champion for the business initiatives of the persons with deafblindness.

## When to start IGA

* There is no fixed age for preparing adults for IGA
* Start training in pre-vocational skills from early age - identifying items, colours, weights, money concept, personal grooming
* Introduction to a specific trade from 14 to 15 years of age.

## Ways to develop IGA

* Business Plan

Build a business plan around one's own personal interest or passion. A clear business plan has to be developed with the help from a Vocational Rehabilitation worker and with support from District Industries Centre (DIC), which provides services and support for self-employment.

* Resources and Funding

Many successful businesses can be started with a relatively small amount of investment. Starting a small business is one way to learn. As they gain confidence and get access to markets or clients they can scale it up. The next step is to approach financial institutions for finance. Different funding organizations may grant loans with repayment periods ranging from 5 to 7 years and may consider a longer repayment period on merits.

Types of funds are:

* Matching fund loan
* Term loans to purchase equipment or vehicles, livestock, or capital assets.
* Working capital loan
* Finance for construction or renovation (Hen coop or shed etc)

* Statutory clearances and supports

Microenterprise sustainability depends on several factors such as a "Person-cantered approach" to develop business plan and continuity. It has to be done around the key signature strength of the Deafblind person based on their abilities and interests. It is always advisable to have support of staff and family members who are involved and trained to support business.

* District Industries Centre (DIC)

District Industries Centre’s (DICs) are located in every district in India and come within the purview of State Government. The objective of DIC is to generate employment for unemployed youth in their own native places by setting up self-employment ventures in Micro enterprises in manufacturing, service and business sector. They also provide linkages with banks. One such program done by DIC in Tamilnadan is called NEEDS - New Entrepreneur-cum-Enterprise Development Scheme. Each state has its own programmes.

## Who will fund projects...?

* District Rural Development (DRDA) & National Trust (NT)- State Government
* NHFDC National handicapped Financial Development Corporation
* Foundations
* Nationalised Banks
* Micro small & medium enterprises
* Micro financial institutions
* Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana

Guidance on statutory and regulatory compliances is given by DICs through a single window clearance for enterprises. Any Deafblind person who needs to know the various regulatory clearances from the local body has merely to approach DIC and based on the type and scope of sector (manufacturing, service or business) appropriate clearances can be facilitated.

## Community - Based Vocational Program

Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) has played an important role in developing livelihood opportunities like Cooperatives, Self Help Groups (SHG), etc. They assist in getting them trained in skills, financial literacy and also facilitate access to financial and raw material sources. The Community-Based Vocational Program opens new doors in various vocational areas for students with special needs. For many, this is their first introduction to the world of work. Students are matched to appropriate community-based worksites for job training. Students work as volunteers one or more days a week, accompanied by a qualified staff member who remains on site. They are never left unsupervised but are encouraged to work independently. The staff member oversees the quality of all work and expands job responsibilities as student progress. Some of the adults in the Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) projects are self-employed with support from the family.

## Vocational trades for persons with deafblindness

* General Stores(Grocery Shop)
* Book Selling
* Cattle Rearing
* Toy Shop
* Diary Shop
* Photocopy and lamination shop along with selling general items
* Grains grinding shop (wheat, rice, grams) along with selling prices
* Banner making
* Beauty parlor
* Tiffin shop
* Umbrella making
* Poultry
* Mobile eatery/Snack shop/Bakery
* Clothes, cosmetic, artificial jewellery shops
* Region specific trades

## Barriers or Challenges in IGA

* Lack of role models
* Impairments may sometimes determine the scope of how the business has to be planned, developed & run
* Access to finance, the application processes and difficulties of filling forms. v Information about enterprise supports not reaching the Deafblind person v Lack of business skills and access to business networks/contacts.
* Fear of losing access to government benefits
* Potential health related issues which limit person's ability and availability to work.
* Fear of failure and lack of confidence especially in women entrepreneurs.
* Lack of education and skills.
* Financial barriers such as access to seed capital and longer-term financing.

# Seed capital to support entrepreneurs with Deafblindness

Sense India is a national NGO supporting persons with deafblindness. Sense India provides vocational training and seed capital to adults with deafblindness to launch micro-enterprises in their community. It also adapts vocational training curriculum and trains vocational instructors to better respond to the needs of persons with deafblindness. Since 2014,600 adults have been trained and 130 have received seed capital to start their own ventures.

## Case Studies of transforming lives of persons with deafblindness through Income Generation Activity (IGA)

### Mrs. Usha Sathyan

Mrs. Usha Sathyan, a strong and confident woman is the only income generating person of her family taking care of higher education of her 2 sons. Today she runs a tailoring unit in Kottayam with the support of IGA grant received from Sense India. She is a person with profound hearing loss and low vision but nothing stopped her in completing her tailoring course as a part of livelihood programme at Self Help Group (SHG), KSSS. The lockdown during Covid-19 period affected her business but gave her new ways to reopen. She generates an alternative income by stitching mask and making snacks at the unit initiated by the women SHG members. She also prepares and sells materials like liquid soap, phenol etc, for an alternative income generation. Mrs. Usha Sathyan states, 'I am thankful to Sense India for the timely support which helped me to become an income generating person for my family and perform my responsibilities well. During Covid-19 crisis she also gave training to 2 other women to stitch mask in her village. She believes training women will lead to empowerment of women and their families.

### Mr. Gowsik Raja

Mr. Gowsik Raja is a young entrepreneur from Trichy, making and selling electrical bend pipes. He purchased semi-automatic machine and raw materials with the support of IGA grant provided by Sense India. He developed progressive vision loss when he was in studying his 9th grade in the special school for hearing impairment. His mother guided him to take up his family business. He was trained to use his literacy and numeracy skills in the trade and to use the machine. His production and sales increased with the new machine. He is now confident that he can further expand his business with the income generation in his business. He stands as an inspiration to young adults like him and his aim is to train and give job opportunities to persons with deafblindness.

### Mr. Vijay Kumar

Mr. K. Vijay Kumar is an inspiring petty shop owner from Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh. He started his petty shop at his residence with the support of IGA grant from Sense India. He was trained by the UETS staff to run the shop. He was trained to use his numeracy skills for money concept to buy and sell products which he learnt in school till his 5th grade. He was also trained about the various items (stock) in the shop and how to interact with the customers. He also improved his communication skills and became socially more active. He used sign boards with large fonts with contrast colour for better visibility as he had problems with vision as well it made him easy to interact with the customers. His earnings gave a new hope to his life and his family. He gained self-esteem and is an inspiration for other young adults with deafblindness. Today, Mr. Vijay Kumar is a person with self-confidence and says "I have a dream to expand my small petty shop business to greater heights''.

# CONCLUSION

This manual has been developed to create awareness and to guide the young adults with deafblindness and their families to explore different ways of becoming financially independent through IGA activities. The people who are featured in this booklet are role models showing the way forward. They provide an insight for young adults and NGOs to explore the career options based on the abilities, interest and financial support and focuses on vocational training to master their skills. It gives an idea for the young adults to choose the appropriate employment model and setting up an enterprise based on their individual potential and family support.

## We acknowledge the IGA role models in this manual

Mr. Senthil Kumar, Chendakkuni, Wayanad, Kerala Ms. Maya & Mr. Madhu, Kottayam, Kerala Mr. Prabakaran, Trichy, Tamil Nadu

Mr. Chandramouli, Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh Mr. Vijay Kumar, Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh Mr. Sibi Joseph, Kottayam, Kerala

Mr. Bijoy Benny, Kottayam, Kerala Mr. Shameer, Kottayam, Kerala Mr. Gowsik raja, Trichy

Mrs. Usha Sathyan, Kottayam, Kera la Mr. Satish, Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh Mr. Chandramouli, UETS, Kakinada

# Did You Know?

"Natural supports" exist in every workplace an employee can tap into. These supports help the person to perform her role and also to feel socially included- which is crucial for high performance and job retention. Natural supports are methods of inclusion and assistance that exist in a given work place that an employee can tap into. These supports allow employee with disability to engage in social rituals or norms and to become a full member of the workplace.

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