

Impact of Digitalization and Awareness for Independence

Introduction

I am **Mushtaq Ahmad Shah**, a passionate Digital Literacy Trainer dedicated to empowering persons with visual impairment. I work as a Digital Literacy Trainer at **Prerana Educational Centre**, a *Parivartan Center of EnAble India*, located in **Siliguri, West Bengal**. I specialize in teaching persons with visual impairment how to use computers and assistive technologies such as screen readers and accessibility features.

Digitalization and awareness play a vital role in improving the independence and quality of life of persons with visual impairment. This presentation is based on my practical experiences during training sessions and awareness workshops conducted during my internship. It highlights how digitalization, accessible software, and awareness about assistive technologies and career opportunities help persons with visual impairment perform daily, educational, and professional tasks independently.

Key Points

- Visual impairment affects daily activities, education, and employment.
- Many persons with visual impairment depend on others for basic tasks.
- Digitalization helps reduce dependency.
- Awareness acts as a bridge towards independence and equality.

Methodology

1. Assessment of Trainees

- Evaluated each trainee's overall ability to determine suitability for computer training.
- Identified individual strengths and areas requiring support.

2. Practical Training Sessions

- Conducted hands-on training sessions and demonstrations.
- Ensured trainees understood tasks before performing them independently.
- Focused on practical skills such as typing, MS Office, and internet usage.

3. Use of Assistive Technology

- Introduced trainees to available assistive technologies.
- Helped them identify tools suitable for their individual needs.
- Enabled efficient and independent task performance.

4. Monitoring Progress

- Observed daily progress in typing and computer-based activities.
- Identified areas needing improvement and provided corrective guidance.

5. Encouragement and Support

- Provided regular feedback, motivation, and emotional support.
- Gradually assigned challenging tasks to build confidence and skills.
- Ensured continuous guidance to promote independence.

Impact Made Through Digital Literacy and Awareness Workshops

1. Digital Literacy

Sl. No.	Course Name	Number of Candidates
1	Fundamentals of Computers	11
2	Fundamentals of Microsoft Excel	30
3	Total	41

2. Awareness Workshops

Sl. No.	Workshop Name	Number of Participants
1	Career Awareness	66
2	Reading Without Seeing	71
3	Total	137

Case Study: Nilesh Dhote

Nilesh Dhote, born in 1987, is a resident of Indore who once had many dreams and aspirations for a bright future. He successfully completed his Master's degree in Sociology and aimed to lead an independent and meaningful life. However, his life changed drastically when he lost his vision due to **Retinal Pigmentosa**, which severely affected his mental health and confidence.

The process of medical treatment and adjustment was emotionally and physically exhausting. Due to his visual impairment, Nilesh gradually lost confidence and began to believe that achieving success or independence was no longer possible. Fear, confusion, and self-doubt dominated his life.

A turning point came when he was contacted by the **Madhya Pradesh Welfare Association for the Blind (MPWAB), Indore**, and informed about their computer training program. He enrolled in the **Fundamentals of Computer** course, which helped him become digitally literate and slowly rebuild his confidence.

With continued effort and encouragement, Nilesh joined various online training programs and developed essential computer skills. The constant guidance and support from his trainers helped him realize that visual impairment is not a barrier to learning or professional growth.

Today, Nilesh is working at the **State Bank of India** and leads an independent life with confidence, dignity, and self-respect. He expresses deep gratitude to his trainers for their continuous motivation and support, which transformed his mindset and reignited his dreams.



Challenges

- Difficulty in sourcing participants.
- Dropout of candidates during or before course completion.
- Travel challenges due to low vision, such as difficulty recognizing faces or reading bus numbers.
- Managing candidates with diverse behaviours and learning needs.
- Replacing visual demonstrations with precise verbal instructions.
- Continuous need for encouragement and confidence-building among trainees.

Outcomes

- Learners achieved greater independence in education, communication, and daily tasks.
- Significant improvement in confidence and self-esteem.
- Trainees acquired skills in typing, MS Office, and internet browsing.
- Improved social interaction through digital communication tools.
- Increased awareness about employment opportunities across various sectors.
- Some learners began earning independently.

Findings

- Digital literacy is a powerful tool for independence among persons with visual impairment.
- Assistive technology is most effective when combined with structured training.

- Patience, empathy, and continuous motivation are essential for success.
- Tactile diagrams aid better conceptual understanding.
- Task-based practical training enhances engagement and confidence.
- Inclusive and supportive environments help overcome emotional and social barriers.
- Career awareness combined with assistive technology bridges the gap between disability and independence.

Conclusion

Digitalization and awareness have the power to transform the lives of persons with visual impairment by promoting independence, confidence, and equal opportunities. With structured training, assistive technology, and emotional support, individuals can overcome physical, social, and psychological barriers. This initiative focuses on practical learning, empathy, and motivation to empower persons with visual impairment to lead independent and dignified lives.

Acknowledgement and Professional Growth

I express my sincere gratitude to **EnAble India** for providing continuous opportunities to support the independence of persons with visual impairment. In 2025, I participated in a **Training of Trainers (ToT)** program in Srinagar, which significantly enhanced my professional competence and inclusive teaching practices. I also conducted online classes for **Fundamentals of Microsoft Excel**, gaining valuable experience in virtual instruction and digital training methodologies.

These experiences have contributed greatly to my professional growth and strengthened my commitment to empowering persons with visual impairment through inclusive education and skill-based training.

Gallery

(Awareness Programme at VMS)

