

Xavier's Resource Centre for the Visually Challenged

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The XRCVC's Annual Report For 2013-14 (May to April)

The Xavier's Resource Centre for the Visually Challenged (XRCVC) turned 10 in September 2013. In this relatively short lifespan, the Centre has transformed itself from being a modest one-computer department established to support blind and low-vision students of St Xavier's College, Mumbai, into one of India's leading support and advocacy centres working towards creating an inclusive society for visually challenged persons. As an enabling unit on campus it has impacted both the micro and macro levels. Our guiding principle through these 10 years has been to ensure that vision loss or impairment only remains a physical condition which can be overcome, rather than go on to become a disability for the visually challenged.

With the unstinted support of the staff and students of St Xavier's College and a small but committed team of 10 professionals, we have been working tirelessly over the years to empower visually impaired persons all over the country.

Every endeavour of the XRCVC is driven by an unflinching commitment to offer state-of-the-art technologies and the best and speediest of services to our members. Our membership base expanded from 295 to 352 this year. While this may appear a relatively modest number for a decade-old organization, we have been able to touch—and hopefully transform—thousands of lives across the country through our advocacy work, particularly in the areas of education access, financial access, print access and independent living (see section sub-titled 'Advocacy').

The academic year 2013-14 has been a momentous year for the XRCVC. After years of painstaking research, we launched our project to make Maths and Science learning accessible for the visually impaired. Our path-breaking report on the subject titled '*Numbers and Reactions*' was released at Techshare in Delhi in February 2014 by Ms Loveleen Kacker, CEO, Tech Mahindra Foundation. Earlier, in July 2013, the XRCVC conducted a Maths and Science workshop for parents, teachers and special educators.



Ms Loveleen Kacker, CEO, Tech Mahindra Foundation releasing 'Numbers and Reactions' along with Dr Sam Taraporevala (left)

After persistent efforts with the Government of India by the XRCVC and other like-minded organizations, India signed The Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled, on April 30. The signature of the treaty by a country is a public indication of its commitment to the goals of the treaty. In this case, the goal was to end a book famine by improving access to published works in accessible formats for the 260 million blind persons in the world as well as those affected with other print disabilities. The treaty has now been signed by 64 of WIPO's (World Intellectual Property Organization) 187 members.

During the year, the XRCVC worked closely with IIT Delhi and Saksham Trust in the development and testing of a Smartcane Device for the blind. The device, an electronic, ultrasonic unit that can be fixed on the top fold of the regular white cane to detect obstacles above knee-level at a distance ranging from one metre to three metres, was launched in Delhi in March 2014.



A testing and training programme for the Smartcane Device for the Blind at the XRCVC

The XRCVC is pleased to welcome on board Mr Krishna Warriar, who joined as Consultant (Project Implementation) in August 2013, and Ms Rebecca Carvalho, who joined as Special Educator (Maths & Science) in December 2013. We'd also like to extend our deep appreciation to Ms Melinda Warty, Project Officer, who left XRCVC in September 2013 to pursue higher education.

Like in the previous academic year, our activities through this year have been channelized through our restructured triad of work:

- Direct Support Services
- Advocacy
- Awareness

Given below is a summary of the XRCVC's activities in 2013-14 under each head.

DIRECT SUPPORT SERVICES

Technologies: The XRCVC continues to remain the leading state-of-the-art assistive technology centre in the country for the visually impaired. Like every year, we procured a wide range of new technologies in 2013-14. Some of these include accessible software like VP Algebra, Audiographic Calculator, Nemetex, Maths Types, Maths Daisy and Sci-Voice for the newly acquired LabQuest hardware to impart training in Maths and Science to visually impaired students. Other technologies procured include Marathi OCR, ABBY Fine Reader Professional 11, Sonic Labeller, Ruby Handheld Magnifier, Zoomex Reader, Google Nexus phone, Lenovo laptop and three high-end desktop systems.

Training: Our comprehensive and revamped training schedule ensured that our Special Educator had her hands full throughout the year, equipping members with a wide range of training workshops covering Assistive Technology, English, Life Skills, Orientation & Mobility, Braille and Science & Maths education.

Through the year, the XRCVC's training services reached out to the following numbers:

MAY 2013 - APRIL 2014

<u>Assistive Technology (AT) Training and Workshops</u>	<u>Participants</u>
AT Workshops: To spread awareness on AT among special educators, parents, teachers, students and other stakeholders	147
<u>All AT related training including: (For Totally Blind and Low-Vision learners)</u> Basic Computer Training & Introduction to Accessible Technologies (BCT-AT) batches	43



An Assistive Technology training workshop at the XRCVC

Training Batches (not AT related)

<u>Course Name: (For Totally Blind and Low-Vision learners)</u>	<u>Participants</u>
Elementary English Training (EET)	16
Orientation & Mobility Training (O&M)	22
Life Skills Training	5
Braille	5

One of the highlights of our training calendar this year was an intensive 40-day training stint organized for two blind teachers from Afghanistan’s Kabul School for the Blind. The training programme was facilitated by the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) and the subjects covered were Teaching Methodologies, Basics of English & Computer Training, Orientation & Mobility, and Braille.

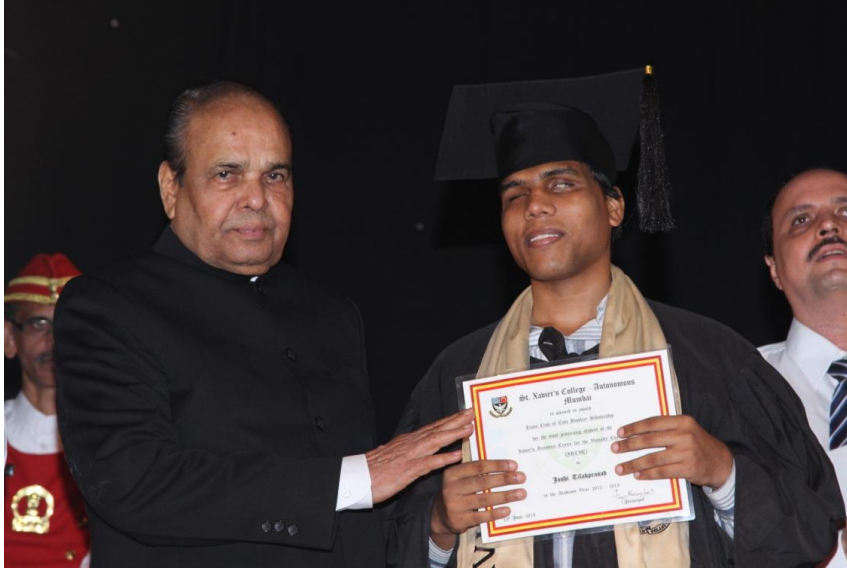


Two visually impaired teachers from Kabul being trained at the XRCVC

Volunteer Services: Our volunteer services this year worked with a robust strength of 132 volunteers, drawn from the college's Social Involvement Programme (SIP). These volunteers helped our members in various ways—from creating accessible print and audio content, to reading study material, helping with individual and group teaching assignments, and as writers for exams.

Scholarship Programmes: The XRCVC continued its scholarship programmes, benefitting blind and low-vision students studying across various streams of education. This year's XRCVC-Tech Mahindra Foundation Scholarships were awarded to 10 visually impaired students. Three of these students are pursuing an MBA (one in IIM Kolkata), five are pursuing degrees in law, and one is pursuing a degree in computer science.

The Lions Club of East Bombay Scholarship was awarded to our member, Mr Tilakprasad Joshi, for being the most deserving visually impaired student graduating from St. Xavier's College, Mumbai.



Tilakprasad Joshi receiving his graduation certificate from the Governor of Maharashtra, K Sankaranarayanan

During the year, one of our members, Mr Kailash Tandel, attended a Leadership Training Programme for Young Leaders with Disabilities organized by National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP) in Delhi. The objective of this programme was to reach out to young people with disabilities and expose them to the social sector movement in India. It also aimed to identify young people with disabilities from across the country and across disabilities and give them a platform to get exposure to advocacy and policy work at the national level.

Sports and Recreation: Three of our student members—Mahesh Mhabdi, Fazal Mansoori and Tushar Valand—bagged medals (one silver and two bronze) while representing Maharashtra at a national level judo competition in Delhi organized by Indian Blind & Para Judo Association. Around 350 participants from 17 states took part in the competition.



(From left) Mahesh Mhabdi, Tushar Valand and Fazal Mansoori with the medals they won at the national level judo competition

ADVOCACY

The XRCVC's advocacy initiatives span across four key areas—Print Access, Financial Access, Education Access and Independent Living. Following is an account of the key highlights under each of these areas.

Print Access:

- The XRCVC organized its unique awareness and sensitization event '*Reading Without Seeing: Antarchakshu – The Eye Within™*' for the publishing community at the Delhi World Book Fair from February 15 to 19, 2014. The event primarily focussed on Print Access, with an aim to train and sensitise the print and publishing industry towards the totally blind and low-vision people as readers and help disseminate information about alternative formats for print-disabled persons. The core objective of '*Reading Without Seeing: Antarchakshu – The Eye Within™*', was to help the publishing community overcome its doubts and apprehensions about print accessibility and closely understand the needs of the print-disabled group. Over 900 participants went through the experience (including 70 persons representing publishing houses—over 45 different publishing entities). Many of them evinced keen interest in participating in the ongoing print access movement, making the event a grand success. The participants were blindfolded and engaged in basic activities related to printing and publishing, which were designed to sensitise and educate them. With blindfolds on, they were made to experience typing, scanning and navigating Daisy players. Participants also had the opportunity to go through a detailed exhibition area, and were exposed to the various technologies used to facilitate effective print access, as also various tools designed to enable the visually impaired to lead full, independent, successful and fulfilling lives. A handbook titled '*The ABC of Inclusive Publishing*' compiled by the XRCVC was distributed to the participants. The handbook aims to initiate the process of building a constructive partnership between the publishing community in India and the world of the print-disabled within the framework of the Copyright Amendment Act, 2012, in India. The success of the event was largely due to the contribution of a committed volunteer pool of students drawn from a number of colleges in Delhi.



Participants at 'Reading Without Seeing: Antarchakshu – The Eye Within™', organized by the XRCVC for the publishing community at the Delhi World Book Fair

- This year, the XRCVC conceptualized and designed a unique Braille-cum-Sighted Desktop Print Calendar for 2014. The calendars have been printed using a special polymer deposit technology, which seamlessly blends Braille with sighted text in such a manner that it can be used by visually challenged persons as also the sighted. Similar approaches have been possible using screen printing methods. However, those need large volumes to make them financially viable. This unique approach of digital print enhancement is useful when volumes are relatively low. It can also very successfully incorporate 2D graphics. Useful applications of this technology can be when illustrated storybooks in Braille can be created for children where paired reading using sighted text and Braille can be created on the same surface. The thicker paper ensures that the dots would not degrade as they are not the result of perforations but rather a polymer deposit. The XRCVC is now exploring different ways in which this concept can be used to make articles of day-to-day use more accessible for the visually challenged—for instance Braille-cum-Sighted Printed menu cards in restaurants.
- During the year, Dr Sam Taraporevala, Director, XRCVC, finalized and released the Scope and Objectives Report for the Daisy Forum of India (DFI) Working Group on Publisher Relations. This working group was constituted at the DFI Board meeting in November 2013 and tasked with bringing out a report in alignment with DFI’s mission to exponentially increase the availability of accessible reading material and affordable reading systems for print-disabled persons in all parts of India by establishing a network of advanced regional production and distribution systems across the nation, and facilitating collaboration between civil society, the publishing industry, technology developers, the education system and government.
- The XRCVC had launched an extremely effective national-level awareness programme last year under the banner of ‘Reading Without Seeing’, which takes access technologies to blind and low-vision users in various small cities and towns across India, and ignites in its audiences the curiosity and basic knowledge to begin their journey of accessing the printed word independently. The programme is a one- to one-and-a-half day workshop module that equips participants with the basic knowhow of a host of assistive technologies. The programme gained added momentum in the academic year 2013-14, and 12 such workshops were conducted during the year, covering a total of 413 participants, across cities and towns in states including Maharashtra and Rajasthan. The XRCVC’s publication ‘*Accessible Technologies to Facilitate Reading—A Synoptic View*’, a compilation of access technologies with detailed description and user-relevant data, was also distributed to participants during these workshops. Over 400 of these books in various formats including on CDs, Braille Books, large font books and standard print were distributed.

Reading Without Seeing Workshops (May 2013 – April 2014)

No	Date	Location	Participants
1	June 22 and 23	Ajmer	44
2	August 3 and 4	Jodhpur	68
3	August 31 and Sept 1	Ahmednagar	50
4	October 5	Dhule	50
5	October 27	Latur	47
6	December 10	Mumbai	20

7	January 4 and 5	Latur	49
8	January 16 to 18 (RWS Level 2)	Mumbai	6
9	March 1	Mumbai	12
10	March 8	Nanded	48
11	April 7 to 12 (RWS Level 2)	Mumbai	6
12	April 25	Mumbai	13
		Total Participants	413



A 'Reading Without Seeing' seminar organized by the XRCVC at Latur



Technology being displayed to visually impaired participants at a 'Reading Without Seeing' seminar organized by the XRCVC

- In addition, the XRCVC launched Level 2 of the 'Reading Without Seeing' workshops this year. This is designed to build capacity among potential facilitators across the country who would, in turn, spread the message of access technology among the visually challenged. Two Level 2 workshops were conducted during the year, and we plan to expand this initiative to many more in the years to come.
- The XRCVC produced a total of 135 new DAISY titles in full text, full audio (a digitally accessible format) this year. These titles have been added to the XRCVC Daisy library, bringing its total count to 399 books. The total number of pages converted into the DAISY format during this period were 26,066. The total audio running time of these books is 1120 hours, 23 minutes, and 28 seconds.
- The XRCVC's Technical Officer Mr Sushil Pandit participated in a training programme 'Production of Accessible Digital books in Daisy & EPUB format' conducted by Saksham and NIVH at the English and Foreign Languages University Hyderabad in December 2013.
- In addition, the XRCVC, through the Daisy Forum of India (DFI), has been actively working on the Online Braille Library Project of the NIVH, which aims to be built up as a national catalogue of accessible books in India. The XRCVC is also actively involved, along with some other organisations, in the creation of a platform which would support the online national accessible library through 'Indiareads.org', which url the XRCVC has already blocked.
- The XRCVC organized a 'Come to Know Bookshare' workshop in February 2014 for Special Educators working with visually impaired and dyslexic students. Ms Kristina Pappas, International Program Manager of Bookshare, an online accessible digital library for print disabled readers, addressed the workshop. Thirty participants from across Mumbai attended, including Ms Kate Currawala, President of the Maharashtra Dyslexia Association.



Ms Kristina Pappas addressing the 'Come to Know Bookshare' workshop

- Keeping in mind the change in law as the biggest lacuna of access in education material, the XRCVC, through the DFI, has spearheaded an advocacy initiative with educational boards and publishing houses across the country to make their material available in accessible formats. We are happy to report that Sheth Publishers, one of the leading publishing houses in the country and DFI's first publisher partner, has offered all its titles, which include textbooks for four universities in Gujarat—namely Gujarat University, Bhavnagar University, Saurashtra University and Kutch University. Titles for the various courses in English offered by these universities can be made available through them. More importantly, Sheth Publishers has moved into ePub 3 books and will be offering all its titles in ePub 3. The XRCVC will test these titles for accessibility and give Sheth Publishers the necessary feedback. It has also decided to make all its Marathi books in Unicode-compliant font.

Financial access:

- The 'Accessible ATM' movement spearheaded by the XRCVC over the last few years gained momentum in 2013-14 with a large number of accessible ATMS being launched all over the country by many banks including Union Bank, State Bank of India, Bank of Baroda, Standard Chartered Bank, Citibank to name a few. We are also happy to report that the XRCVC worked closely with Corporation Bank through the year to help it launch its first bilingual accessible ATM in Mumbai. The ATM is located at the Mahapalika Marg branch, within St Xavier's College.
- This year, *Antarchakshu—The Eye Within™*, the XRCVC's mega sensitization and awareness programme organized annually in Mumbai at St Xavier's College, adopted the theme Financial Inclusion, with an aim to train and sensitise the banking industry towards the totally blind and low-vision people as bank customers. Of the over 1600 participants at *Antarchakshu™* in August 2013, over 600 were bankers from 35 banks/allied institutions, making the event a grand success. The participants were blindfolded and engaged in basic banking activities which were designed to sensitise and educate them. They had to experience the method of locating their bank and then went through various activities like cheque printing, cheque deposit, cash withdrawal and passbook updation with the blindfold on. Participants also had the opportunity to go through a detailed exhibition area, and were exposed to the various technologies used to facilitate effective banking access. The experience continued with a short audiovisual (*Breaking Barriers, Achieving Access*), which was designed to reinforce the message that the visually challenged lead an independent, successful and fulfilling life. A handbook titled '*Bankers' Guide to Inclusive Banking*' compiled by the XRCVC was released on the occasion and distributed to the participants. Accessible live ATMs from Union Bank of India, State Bank of India and Bank of Baroda were also on display. One of the unique features of the event was that these ATMs were sourced from three major ATM manufacturers — Wincor, Diebold and NCR.



Blindfolded participants at Antarchakshu—The Eye Within™, the XRCVC's mega sensitization and awareness programme organized annually in Mumbai at St Xavier's College

- Following the success of *Antarchakshu™*, Axis Bank and Kotak Bank approached the XRCVC to discuss the implementation of inclusivity initiatives.
- Earlier in the year, the XRCVC helped Bank of Baroda to chalk out a list of feasible locations across the country where they could convert their existing ATMs into Accessible ATMs.
- The XRCVC, along with G3ict and Indian Banks' Association (IBA), organized a 'High-Level Meeting on Inclusive Financial Services' in Mumbai in February 2014. G3ict is an advocacy initiative launched in December 2006 by the United Nations Global Alliance for ICT and Development, in cooperation with the Secretariat for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at UN DESA. As it is estimated that over 100 million people in India have disabilities and have little to no independent access to banking services, the objective of the high-level meeting was to bring together key decision-makers to drive change in the accessibility of financial services for persons across the spectrum of disabilities. There were over 30 participants at the meeting, representing a swathe of institutions like Reserve Bank of India, Indian Banks' Association, State Bank of India, BCSBI, Bank of Baroda, Federal Bank, Standard Chartered Bank, IBM, CMC Ltd, Accion, Airtel Money, NCR Corporation, BarrierBreak and Sightsavers. The deliberations were extremely fruitful, and subsequent to the meeting, the XRCVC submitted a report titled 'Key follow-up points from the high-level meeting on inclusive financial services' to the IBA's chief executive.



Deliberations at a 'High-Level Meeting on Inclusive Financial Services' organized in Mumbai by the XRCVC, along with G3ict and Indian Banks' Association (IBA)

Education Access:

- As a result of persistent follow-ups by the XRCVC with IIM-Indore, the CAT 2013 writer rules were amended in September 2013 in accordance with Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MSJE) guidelines.
- During the year, the XRCVC continued its collaboration with the Maharashtra University of Health Sciences (MUHS) Nashik, to develop additional appropriate examination circulars for visually challenged students studying Physiotherapy.
- In June 2013, a team from the XRCVC visited Prime Academy (an ICSE school in Mumbai) to discuss the various ways in which we could play a supportive role to help a student member studying in the school.
- Our Special Educator Ms Calveena D'Sylva attended a Brain Gym workshop organized by Leap Ahead Assessment & Learning Centre in Mumbai in November 2013.
- Our Special Educator (Maths & Science) Ms Rebecca Carvalho attended a 2-day Accessible Science Workshop for teacher-trainers in Bangalore in December 2013, which

focused on science teaching methods to visually impaired students. Dr Sam Taraporevala and Ms Carvalho, also made a joint presentation at the TechShare meet in Delhi titled, 'Numbers and Reactions—Thoughts on Making Maths and Science Accessible'.

Independent Living:

- The XRCVC held a cooking workshop, Survival 1.01, at a cooking studio in Andheri in May 2013. At this workshop, 6 visually impaired participants were introduced to preparing a simple Indian meal – Rice (cooked in a microwave), *Dal* and a Vegetable dish (cooked on an induction stove).
- The XRCVC collaborated during the year with a team from Viviana Mall in Thane to make the mall accessible for people with disabilities. We also designed and helped print a tactile floor map of the mall, which can be of immense use to visually impaired visitors.
- In June 2013, the XRCVC met a representative from Solus V2 a diabetes-research organization in the United States that sells talking glucometers, which helps people with visual impairment to assess their blood sugar levels independently. We acquired one device for our use, and also to demonstrate how it works at our various workshops.
- The XRCVC is working closely with the Taj group of hotels to increase inclusion initiatives in the group's properties. Some of the initiatives being worked on are Braille room numbers, emergency exit and menu cards, and tactile floor plans.
- The XRCVC held discussions during the year with Disability Research and Design Foundation on how museums can be made accessible.

AWARENESS INITIATIVES

- In the academic year 2013-14, the XRCVC conducted 15 General Awareness workshops covering a total of 3216 participants.

Some of these directly focused on sensitization, and were held for / at a wide range of corporates and institutions including Hindustan Unilever Ltd, Larsen & Toubro, Standard Chartered Bank, Capgemini, Viviana Mall (Thane), The Alliance for Global Education LLC, Akanksha Pune, and the AIKTC College of Architecture, Panvel, among others.

General awareness workshops conducted by the XRCVC (May 2013 to April 2014)

No	Date	Target Group	Main Focus	Location	Participants
1	5 th June 2013	Corporate employees of Viviana Mall, Thane	Sensitization workshop	Viviana Mall	15
2	28 th June 2013	Demystifying Disabilities Workshop at the Summer School 2013 with students from the	Sensitization workshop	St Xavier's College	16

		University of California, Berkeley, USA and St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Mumbai, India titled 'Economics and Development in Indian Society' where students of both institutions were introduced to the lives of people with visual impairment			
3	5 th July 2013	Parents, teachers and special educators	Maths and Science workshop	St Xavier's College	18
4	6 th July 2013	School students	Maths and Science fun workshop for children	XRCVC	3
5	9 th July 2013	Corporate employees of Capgemini	Sensitization workshop	Capgemini	20
6	19 th July 2013	Standard Chartered employees/legal associates	Mini-Antarchakshu (with 30 volunteers) & Sensitization as part of the 10th Anniversary celebrations of 'Seeing is Believing' by Standard Chartered Bank	Four Seasons Hotel, Worli	110
7	15 th September 2013	Antarchakshu volunteers	Antarchakshu training and orientation sensitization workshops	St Xavier's College	177
8	16 th -17 th September 2013	Antarchakshu 2013: Primary focus on Bankers (631 banker participants covering 35 banking institutions)	Sensitization	St Xavier's college	1630

9	4 th October 2013	Exchange students from The Alliance for Global Education, Pune	Sensitization	St Xavier's college	30
10	14 th November 2013	Akanksha students from Pune	Sensitization	St Xavier's College	80
11	8 th January 2014	Students of AIKTC College of Architecture, Panvel	Sensitization	AIKTC College, Panvel	33
12	10 th February 2014	Special Educators	General Awareness Workshop about Bookshare	St Xavier's College	30
13	13 th February 2014	Antarchakshu (Delhi) volunteers: World Book Fair	Sensitization	Miranda House College, Delhi	90
14	15 th to 19 th February 2014	Antarchakshu (Delhi 2014) World Book Fair: Primary focus on Publishers	Sensitization	Pragati Maidan, Delhi	902
15	5 th March 2014	Exchange students from The Alliance for Global Education, Pune	Sensitization	St Xavier's College	26
16	7 th April 2014	Hindustan Unilever Ltd	Sensitization	Hindustan Unilever Ltd, Andheri	52
				Total Participants	3232

PRESENTATIONS AND COLLABORATIONS: NETWORKING INITIATIVES

- Dr. Sam Taraporevala was the Keynote speaker at a State level seminar on Educational and Career guidance for visually challenged at the Blind Student's Learning Centre, Department of Education and Extension in association with Office of the Student Welfare, University of Pune. A seminar paper was presented on the theme 'Careers in Social Sciences'.
- Dr Sam Taraporevala was the lead plenary speaker at a national conference 'Harnessing Technology for the empowerment of persons with Visual Impairment' on the theme of 'Accessing banking services – a retrospect and prospect'. The Conference was organized by the National Institute of the Visually Handicapped in New Delhi.
- Dr Sam Taraporevala gave the inaugural address at a seminar on 'Deconstructing Disability' organised by Lakshita, The Enabling Society, Miranda House, New Delhi.
- The XRCVC was appointed as Research Collaborator and Technical Consultant by the K J Somaiya Comprehensive College of Education, Training & Research in an ICSSR funded major research

project on 'Making astronomy concepts accessible to the visually impaired school children' in India.

- Dr Sam Taraporevala addressed the Achieve Together Conference for school children at the American School of Bombay, Bandra-Kurla Complex. The theme of the one-day conference was Courage, Compassion and Wisdom.
- Dr Sam Taraporevala has been included as part of the expert committee for its ADIP scheme. The Ministry has been implementing the Scheme of Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase/fitting of Aids and Appliances (ADIP) since 1981 with the objective of providing durable/sophisticated and scientifically manufactured modern, standard aids and appliances to promote physical/social and psychological rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) by reducing the effects of disabilities and enhance their economic potential. the Department of Disability Affairs, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, a list of Access Technologies that can be used under the government's ADIP scheme.
- During the year, the XRCVC had regular interactions with senior officials of the Department of Disability Affairs, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India, on various inclusivity initiatives mooted by the Government of India.

LOOKING AHEAD

On the occasion of our 10th anniversary, we renew our pledge to make society more inclusive for visually challenged persons. A mature and evolved society is one that is truly inclusive—and embraces people of different backgrounds and dispositions—be they persons who are economically on the fringes, educationally marginalized or those with disabilities. It is imperative to empower all sections of society, particularly persons with disabilities and the weakest of the weak, for by empowering such persons you empower the entire family and consequently the locality, region and nation.

We would like to extend our gratitude to our funders, without whom we would not have been able to come this far. We would like to specially thank Sightsavers, Tech Mahindra Foundation, SAP India, Dhun Pestonji Parakh Discretionary Trust, Samruddha Resources Limited, Johnson & Johnson, Godrej Industries, Standard Chartered Bank, AMPI Agencies Pvt Ltd, Suryavanshi Ads and Promotions Pvt Ltd, The Global Alliance of Education, Tata Sons Ltd, Lions Club of East Bombay, and Mr Suresh Bazaj.

A big thank you to our large pool of volunteers as well. Their commitment ensures that a small organisation like XRCVC is able to touch the lives of countless people all over the country.

In conclusion, we would like to place on record our deep appreciation to St. Xavier's College—the Principal, management, staff members and students—for demonstrating to educational institutes all over the country how a centre of learning can be truly inclusive to persons with disabilities, particularly blind and low-vision persons.