



Blind Lead Trust

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Registration no. 757-2018

Annual Report of Blind Lead Trust 2022-2023

Name of the Organization: Blind Lead Trust (BLT)

Background of the organization:

Blind Lead Trust (BLT) is an organization that has been registered on 26 June 2018 as a Public Trust and also it has been registered under the act of the Rights of Persons With Disabilities (RPWDS-2016) on the 26th of April the year of 2022. Its aim is to bring equal opportunities in education and learning for the visually impaired by providing them free training courses, free hostels and to work for the welfare of the visually impaired community. It aims to provide the visually-impaired with jobs, to provide free training courses in an accessible way to the visually-impaired citizens in the state of Meghalaya and across the country. In the state of Meghalaya there are no institutions or organizations which provide free educational training courses and accommodation for the visually impaired, it is only the Blind Lead Trust which does that. The Blind Lead Trust has trustees, staff and fellows who are being trained, learned, to support each other. At present, the organization has an office in Nongthymmai Lawjynriew, Shillong, Meghalaya and a website as well as a Facebook page in the name of Blind Lead Trust as well as Trust Deed. BLT India is a non-profit organization based in Shillong, Meghalaya with the mission to protect the rights of the visually impaired, to also make improvements for their future, to help them to fulfill their dreams, to participate in society and to be more in-reliant and self-sufficient. List of beneficiaries may include – Six (6) Staff, seven (7) Trustees, and the total beneficiaries are fifty eight (58) which have benefited from our organization till now.

Aims and Objectives of the Organization

1. To undertake programmes/projects for the personal development and for the benefit of blind and low vision, including education, awareness, independence and productivity.
2. To undertake programmes/projects for socio-economic development and social integration for the visually impaired community.
3. To promote and propagate awareness and rights of the visually impaired persons.

4. To undertake any other objects of public utility.

Executive Summary:

In these last two years the organization had been able to run its work smoothly through the cooperation of its members, staff and other volunteers. In fact we know the organization had faced various circumstances during its journey to walk through obstacles but still we are glad to see that the organization has worked hard without any failure to lend and contribute to the society to work for the welfare of the visually impaired community and to the other differently abled who faced hardships and who really need a helping hand, through this it has been upgraded the power of the organization from time to time related with our dreams and projects that the organization had aimed before and even the ATM project that we have is also successful even though we haven't completed all yet we are so grateful to the government for helping us to sponsor for this project. apart from the ATM project we have also start up a broom project this year of 2023 which can benefit the visually impaired community who doesn't get to educate themselves in schools or any institutions, we could found that through this project it can be easy steps or fast to teach and guide the visually impaired even though we have to fight for various drawbacks that we face. We observe that it is not easy for us to market this product that we have made since we have just started but we hope that we will be able to market this product and then we can teach the same thing to the trainees. in fact we also have the other project like to set up a free computer training center for the visually impaired which we want to make it successful but unfortunately we are unable to do that because we have lack of financial support, yet we feel grateful since we are able to work out smoothly with our assistive devices prototype projects by coordinating with the NIT (National Institute of Technology).

Throughout these years and up till this year we are able to work out with our prototypes even though it takes time but absolutely it has been improving and we are able to engage and collaborate forward with the NIT University along with their agreement. At the same time, the NIT is going to help us to register for the patterns of the prototypes. The Organization is also feeling hopeful since is able to do a collaboration with the NIT University of sShillong To promote these prototypes projects through the 4 leading. and the Braille-x is the first assistive device that we had taken up to start with the accomplishment.

The director of BLT and the acting secretary went to attend the exhibition programme which was organized by the science and technology department, Government of Meghalaya. There they went to introduce and advertise our assistive prototypes, that is braille labeller and wax-pen designer. These are the assistive devices that are used by the visually impaired people and founded by the late Dr. Theodore M. Moallem, this was led by NIT University.

In the year 2023 our organization had started the training which is based on the handicraft so we began

with the broom Training. In this project some of the trainees of our organization had started to train and make brooms so that through this project it will be beneficial to those visually impaired who are interested in making and learning about the handicraft.

Our organization had also distributed to the underprivileged visually impaired, we were able to lend our helping hand to be accessible in their knowledge. Our organization had also given other normal people to come for the internship related to our activities, this is the contribution to both the visually impaired and the sighted people.

Our organization did the best to work hard for the welfare of the society, especially for the differently abled people. Therefore, I express our gratitude to the people who had contributed to our organization, it could be through financial, things, ideas, etc. I also express our gratitude to the Government and staff, officers of our state for lending their helping hand. I would also like to thank my staff, volunteers and to all the internship students and staff from Martin Luther Christian University (MLCU) and others for helping our organization to grow.

Activities:

1. On 7 of April 2022, the organization celebrated the first death anniversary of our co-founder of the Blind Lead Trust Organization (Late) Dr. Theodore Moallem.

2. The organization also collaborated with different associations from Ri Bhoi District by visiting the orphaned siblings (consisting of 4 children) in which two among these siblings are mentally retarded. As per the visit, it is observed that they required a house, and by collaborating with the different associations we were able to construct the house urgently for these orphaned siblings. This house was inaugurated by Shri. Jason S.Mawlong (MLA) of Umsning constituency with the presence of Smti. Magdalene S.Mawlong (MDC) along with the different organizations.

3. To help more visually impaired people who are in need, the organization had helped one visually impaired woman named Mary Kyndait to observe again and construct the urgent house for her since her house was totally damaged. The visually impaired woman could not construct her house since her husband left her and she had no financial support. So, the organization took initiatives to help construct a house for her from its own funding.

4. To improve the organization and promote to the donors, the organization had applied to be ready for the (12A, 80G) Licenses under the exemption of income tax department of Kolkata headquarter and finally last year the organization successfully completed its audit with the assistance of the Chartered Accountant.

5. To make the society understand the importance of the White Cane for the visually impaired as it symbolized independence, the Blind Lead Trust celebrated World White Cane Safety Day on 15th October 2022 since we found that the people in this area have a lack of understanding towards the rights of the visually impaired. The white cane is very precious for the visually impaired as it helps them move freely independently. The Blind Lead Trust organization conducted a rally from stand war Jowai to Ladthalaboh Indoor Stadium Hall. The chief guest of this program was Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Smti. D.T. Syngai of West Jaintia Hills District, Guest of Honor by Dr. H.H.Mohrmen. and followed as a special guest SMT. Belbora Wankhar secretary of Meghalaya Parents Association for Disabilities This programme was participated by the Director of BLT Organization, staff, internship students, volunteers, students of Kiang Nangbah College, Thomas Jones Synod College, the parents and guardians of the visually impaired and the visually impaired themselves. so, the administration of West Jaintia Hills District Administration has sponsored the expenditure of this program Rs 50000.

6. The Blind Lead Trust (BLT) as an organization has worked on various projects, activities as well as in conducting programmes. The BLT has provided an assistive device (smartphone) to one visually impaired woman of Ri Bhoi District and also in providing training on how to access the smartphone.

7. In this year the Blind Lead Trust conducted different activities in relation to the welfare of the visually impaired. The BLT team has also tried so hard to raise funds for the different projects of the organization in order to make it sustainable and it has tried to partner with various NGOs from within as well as outside of the state to develop the projects of the organization. but unfortunately it was so difficult to get the donation from our state as well.

8. To make the organization strong and to spread its work and projects and to make it accessible for the visually impaired the BLT has created its own website which is accessible for the visually impaired which in a way will also make people aware of its existence and as well for the public domains etc.

9. The organization has also collaborated with the Vision Aid Academy to provide the assistive devices (smartphones) and also organize training for the visually impaired beneficiaries. With the support of the Vision Aids, the BLT got the opportunity to provide smartphones to the beneficiaries especially to those who belong to the underprivileged students of visually impaired category. This has helped them get access to smartphones which otherwise they cannot afford to buy themselves. In this regard we were able to distribute fourteen smartphones which were 10 devices by the Vision-Aid to the beneficiaries.

10. To raise the issues related with accessibility of transportation, the organization had participated in the Signature Campaign based on accessibility of transportation in Shillong in collaboration with the different organizations who look after the differently abled people under the leadership of Mr. Ferdinand Lyngdoh demanded from the government for the accessibility of transportation for the Person with Disabilities since the accessibility of transportation for such persons is lacking in our state. The organization did this in order to make the government more attentive to the needs of the visually impaired community. From 2022 onwards. The organization had started to open internship programs for the students and there are students from Martin Luther Christian University Department of Social Work and Sociology who did the internship. By opening the internship, we experience that it has benefitted the organization. The internship includes different activities like awareness programmes, pasting the posters in different areas and organizing street plays. At the same time, it benefits the internship students where they get to observe new things, gain valuable work experiences, explore a career path, develop and refine skills, gain confidence and others. even though they get to learn on how to deal and cooperate with the visually impaired.

11. The organization had also sought sponsorship from the Government of Meghalaya for the Talking ATMs Project. The organization took a step to follow up many times to seek the financial support it has requested from the government, and it has also successfully received the sponsorship. The BLT

organization took initiative to launch the Talking ATMs project in order to promote the visually impaired to use transactions with their ATM Card. Through the sponsorship of the government the organization got the opportunity to do a survey on this project where the visually impaired can use the ATM independently.

12. The organization held regular meetings with the National Institute of Technology (NIT) of Shillong to improve its assistive devices, the Wax pen and the Braille labeler. In these previous two years we on behalf of the organization had done our best to do a research based on these assistive devices and we found that there are no any other relations with our designs. Hence, we got the opportunity to register the patterns of these prototypes through the assistance of NIT university of Shillong. So, from both sides we took the decision to proceed with the first prototype called Braille Labeller which had been renamed it as Braille-X and to move forward along with the agreement of the university to lead and fulfill the vision of the organization.

13. The organization also celebrated the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3rd December at U Soso Tham Auditorium. On this day the Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities, Government of Meghalaya organized this programme for all the persons with disabilities in Meghalaya. The observance of such a day aims to promote an understanding of disability issues and to mobilize support for the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in all aspects of life which consists of the political, social, economic and cultural life. The Blind Lead Trust has been invited to be part of this event. The Director of Blind Lead Trust and one of the staff represented and attended the programme along with three fellows from the Blind Lead Trust Organization. The Director of BLT was facilitated on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The organization was awarded for initiating projects like installation of talking ATMs, computer training center and further Pursuing for “Assistive Technology Development Initiative”. He has been an immense support and aid to many young persons with disabilities of Meghalaya.

14. On the 22nd of December 2022, the Blind Lead Trust attended a programme which was initiated by the Barefoot Trust Organization with the instruction of the District Administration of East Khasi Hills along with the Election Commission Branch of Meghalaya in the Conference Room of the District

Council. This was an awareness program on how to use the Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) for persons with disabilities. This programme was led by one of the staff of Barefoot Trust, Ms. S.Syiemiong. It was also attended by the government officers from different departments like State Resource Center, Election Commission and District Administration. In this programme they trained us on how to operate the electronic voting machine and explained to us everything about the processes at the same time the rules and regulation so that all the persons with disabilities will know what to do during the voting process

and to review for the preparation facilities that are accessible whether we are accepted or not and also to seek more problems that the persons with disabilities are faced with related to this issue. so, all of the NGOs who belong with the persons with disabilities are okay with the preparations by the government.

15. To make persons with visual impairment more economically stable, especially those illiterate and unemployed, the organization has extended its full support to artisans. So as to make the visually impaired be more independent the organization has started to set up a broom marketing.

16. The organization had started the Talking ATM Project. The team members of BLT surveyed each and every corner of the district about the ATM machine. The first thing the BLT members investigate is whether the Machine The Blind Lead trust (BLT) Organization had conducted a survey for the project of ATM Talking Software in every headquarters of all the districts in Meghalaya. This Project was sponsored by the Government of Meghalaya to the Blind Lead Trust organization and it is for the betterment of the visually impaired citizens of our State. In the beginning we are going to proceed with this project until the end and after that we will submit the report to the Government and RBI (Reserve Bank of India) and hence, the Government and the RBI could come out with a certain solution on what they needed to do and what are the way and means that they are going to upgrade the machine in an accessible manner for the visually impaired user. The BLT member had completed the survey in all the district of Meghalaya i.e. in East Khasi Hills, Ri- Bhoi District, West Khasi Hills, South West Khasi Hills, West Jaintia Hills, East Khasi Hills, West Garo Hills, North Garo Hills, South Garo Hills and East Garo Hills district is accessible for the visually impaired as the machine is a touch screen or keypad. Whether the machine has the availability of the braille tactile in all the options such as in card slot, cash slot, receipt and fingerprints. We also survey where the environment is friendly for the

visually impaired. Whether the location is accessible not only for the visually impaired but for the locomotor and the person with disability. We also hope that our organization will be able to accomplish and fulfill our goals. With this project it will help our blind friends to operate the ATM machine successfully and independently. The organization appreciates the State government for their support and consideration for the needs of our visually impaired community.

18. On the 5th November 2022 the members of Blind Lead Trust organization along with the interns of Martin Luther Christian University went to Mairang to give awareness on RPWD Act 2016. The programme was held in the public place and the target groups were generally to everyone, since it was necessary to make the people aware about the RPWD Act 2016 along with the different types of disabilities and its rights. Ms Bandwina Khymdeit (Assistant membership) of the BLT Who talked about RPWD Act 2016 and explained more about her personal experience on how she faces difficulties in daily life.

The main objective of the awareness program was :-

- 1: To make people aware about the RPWD Act 2016.
- 2: To make people understand about the rights of people with disabilities.
- 3: To let the people know that there are such organizations that look for the welfare of people with different disabilities.

The student social worker also conducts a pretest and posttest in order to find that people are aware or not about RPWD ACT 2016, at the same time we find that people had no information or knew nothing about the RPWD Act and the rights of disability.

Conclusion:

The Blind Lead Trust organization would like to conclude that through these activities we can promote persons with visual impairment by ensuring that there shall be good opportunities for them to develop their lives by securing a bright life and independent future. We hope that it can sustain and also help the visually impaired overcome the obstacles which they are facing in their day-to-day lives. We also wish that our organization will grow further in achieving our goals.

