

BLIND GRADUATES FORUM OF INDIA

Reg. No. F11763 (BOM)

Flat No. 1506, Tower B, Raheja Sherwood

Behind the Hub Mall, Western Express Highway

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Annual Report for BGFI from April 2018 to March 2019

The last AGM of the Blind Graduates' Forum of India was held on Saturday 14th July 2018 at 3.00 pm at National Association for the Blind (NAB), 11/12, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan Road, WorliSeaface, Mumbai – 400 030. This report lists all the activities and events that were held from the financial year April 2018 to March 2019.

Update on change of President

Vishal Kumar Jain expressed his intentions to step down from the post of President, Blind Graduates Forum of India as he is joining a new job in a different city and it will be difficult for him to discharge his duties effectively.

After deliberation, the Executive Council asked Sadaf Khan to officiate as an acting president till further notice.

Monthly Sessions Update

We have organized knowledge sharing sessions with a view to expand our knowledge in all aspects including science and technology, politics, career, personal growth, social issues and many more. The following sessions were held in the last year –

Knowledge sharing sessions:

1. Session on Nonverbal communication by MS. Savita John held on 26/05/2019 at Yashvantrao Chavan Pratishthan, Colaba. Savita is a renowned corporate Trainor, in the session, she touched upon various aspects of nonverbal communication i.e. Body language, eye contact, upper and lower body posture, dressing sense and grooming and many more.
2. Session on futuristic technologies held on 23/06/2018 at College of Social work, Nirmala Niketan. The session was conducted by Rahul Vijay, Sagar Sodah, Aditi Shah, Vishal Kumar. In this session, we explored the potential of Artificial Intelligence, Analytics, 3D Printing, Wearable technology, Internet of Things and Automation. We also had live demonstration of smart devices i.e. smart speakers, Seeing AI application, smart wearable devices etc.
3. Open house discussion on career planning and growth for visually impaired held on 27/10/2019 at College of Social Work, Nirmala Niketan. In the session, we along with some area experts as panelists had a fruitful discussion on preparing for your first job and a subsequent job change, important factors contributing towards career growth, using networking for career advancement, professional job search portals i.e. LinkedIn, Naukri etc.
4. Session on financial planning and investment analysis in collaboration with SEBI held on 08/12/2019 at Yashvantrao Chavan Pratishthan. We hosted Mr. Rahul Kelapure and Ms. Vishakha More who guided us about the importance of investment towards wealth creation, mechanisms developed by SEBI to safeguard investor interests, what to look for while investing in mutual funds, accessible portals for investment analysis and transacting online.

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5. Session named Na Mein Na Hai, in collaboration with Rising Flame and Tanya Computer Center held on 19/02/2019 at Yashvantrao Chavan Pratishthan. In the session, we had an enlightening discussion on the topic of consent in romantic relationship with Ms. Nidhi Goyal and Ms. Shrinidhi as panelists. The discussion was made interactive through audio/video clips, storytelling, situation-based games / discussions etc.
6. Session on STEM education held on 23/03/2019 in collaboration with XRCVC and SightSavers at ST. Xavier's college. We hosted Vidhya from Vision Empower, Aditi Shah and subject matter experts from XRCVC who enlightened us on the career opportunities in the dynamic field of STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics). In addition to their journey as trainers / students, they focused on the accessible ways to study in STEM field, Support groups i.e. I-STEM, Learning through online courses, job opportunities etc.

New Graduates and Readers

Celebration of Readers' Day and Felicitation of New Blind Graduates was held on Saturday, September 22, 2018 where 5 readers, 15 graduates and 4 volunteers were felicitated at Yashvantrao Chavan Pritishthan. we had as Guest speaker, Mr. Amit Jain who is a researcher in the field of diversity and inclusion from IIM Kolkata. After his PGDM from IIM Ahmedabad, Amit has worked with various corporates in the field of business development, transformation, Diversity, CSR etc. Additionally, we also hosted Vineet Saraiwala from Big Bazar who briefed us on the accessibility initiatives taken by Big Bazar to make shopping barrier free for persons with disabilities. Vineet also talked about his experiences as a marathon runner and demonstrated the use of a harness which is used by visually impaired runners.

Experiential learning and outdoor Activities

1. Practical workshop on table etiquettes on 28/04/2018 at Bombay Haveli. We hosted a famous corporate trainer who tried to address the practical difficulties faced by visually impaired persons at outdoor eateries. The participants were given practical demonstration to enjoy various dishes from different cuisines.
2. One Day Trek to Asawa fort on 15th August 2018 in collaboration with the Young Zingaro trekking Club. We are extremely delighted to share that the trek has been seeing enthusiastic response since its inception.
3. . accessible tour to Dockyard "Bhao Cha Dhakka" on 24th November 2018, the participants were given a 2-hour guided tour to the Mumbai's coastal line along with accessible demonstration of the operations of a motor boat.

Accessible Indian Currency Campaign

Reflecting on the legal front there are 2 petitions filed in the court through different entities, one of these focusing on the tactile marking on 50 rupee note and the other one focusing on the inaccessibility of notes and coins. It was observed that both the petitions have not covered the inaccessibility of digital currency. Also, the arguments for accessible currency has potential for stronger legal and research backing. RBI has recently proposed to develop an app for currency recognition as a single solution to inaccessible Indian currency. BGFI felt the need to oppose this strongly and instead strive for a solution that would be holistic

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and applicable for all blind citizens. We observed that we have strong research, correspondence and minutes with decision makers, and a large number of people connected through the campaign. Hence BGFI can add a lot of value legally on accessible Indian currency by filing a legal intervention.

The EC unanimously resolved to take appropriate legal interventions and work towards making Indian Currency accessible. The EC also approved Ila Haldia to represent BGFI in the court as the legal council.

In accordance with the resolution, a petition was filed in the Delhi High Court on with Ila Haldia representing BGFI as council

Representation to Committee for Deepening Digital Payments, RBI:

In Feb 2019, BGFI was invited by Committee for Deepening Digital Payments Chaired by Nandan Nilikhani to make a representation on the difficulties faced by visually impaired persons with respect to modes of digital payments. BGFI drafted a detailed representation covering all possible digital payment modes i.e. Mobile / internet banking, E-wallets, UPI, Credit / Debit cards and POS machines, Self-serving electronic banking units etc. We also got a chance to make a presentation in person in front of the committee on 8th March 2019. With the final report of committee incorporating many of our key suggestions, we hope to make a positive change towards accessible of digital payment mechanism.

Mentorship program

To simplify the process for associating new mentors as well as students, BGFI has started hosting mentorship form on the website. We have received overwhelming response to our promotional advertisements hosted by various channels of media i.e. Radio Udan, Eyeway and Newshook and other relevant modes of publications. We developed an internal process through which we can substantially reduce the time taken by us to find suitable mentors for visually impaired students. We were given an opportunity to talk about the mentorship program at Radio Udaan Convention Held in Mumbai in Feb'19.

Encouraging Future group for accessible shopping experience at Big Bazar

BGFI had requested the Future Group to make the shopping experience accessible for persons with disabilities over a year ago. We appreciate and thank the Future Group for taking it up seriously and creating the first accessible shopping experience in India. BGFI contributed in spreading the message of their initiatives like Cooking without seeing workshops, Quite hour etc. as well as personally volunteering for the product launches / workshops as and when required.

Research

BGFI continues to support various students and professionals in identifying and conducting research on areas relevant for persons with disabilities

WE have actively engaged with the new-age startups developing innovative solutions to make the life easier for visually impaired persons. In this capacity, we have provided our input to persons / organizations researching on the needs / pain points. Some of our major collaborations were I-STEM, University of Georgia Tech, Tata Institute of Social Sciences ETC.

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BGFI's reach on Internet and Social Media

BGFI's website is regularly revamped with the latest information about our key activities. Additionally, we have simplified the association process for new members as well as volunteers by hosting the relevant forms on our website. BGFI is able to tap a larger pool of participants in its sessions through the social media channel's adopted last year. In addition to the updated website, we post regular updates on all the channels along with recordings of the sessions to make them reach the entire country.

In 2018, BGFI started collaborating with Eyeway and Newshook for increasing the reach of our activities. The results have been very positive with web hosting many first-time participants in our activities and persons living in various parts of the country reaching out for support / appreciation for our activities. We are extremely delighted to share that the Facebook page currently has over 300 likes and the activities are followed by people not only from India but other countries as well.

Membership Update

We had 175 members till March 2018. Till now we have added total 20 members to the list getting the total number of members to 195 (10 of them being Associate Life Members and 19 members from the Nagpur chapter).

Delhi Chapter Update

With an objective to make a positive impact in more number of lives, BGFI decided to conduct our activities in Delhi also. In this capacity, we are happy to report that we successfully conducted a Reader's day for the first time in Delhi on 3rd November 2018 and felicitated 12 readers/writers and 8 graduates. We hosted Mrs. MadhuBala Sharma as the chief guest who is a senior manager with Concentrics in the Learning & Development department.

We express our sincere gratitude to all our facilitators, NGOs, visually impaired community for always being supportive for all our activities.

Honorary Secretaries

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'AM' or similar initials.

Ajay Minocha, Payal Jethra and Amit Pahuja.