

24th NCPEDP-LTIMindtree Helen Keller Awards 2023



*To understand
is essential
to progress.*

– Helen Keller



The Disabled-Friendly Corporate Logo

The Disabled-Friendly Corporate Logo was designed in 1999 when the Helen Keller Awards were first instituted. The brief for the design was simple – it was to portray the partnership between the Indian corporate sector and the disabled citizens of India.

What emerged was a simple, yet striking, graphic representation in blue and yellow – the international colours of disability. The logo symbolises an ideal relationship between companies and people with disabilities. Visually, it portrays two sides of the same coin, or in other words a yin and yang relationship. It seeks to reinforce the fact that people with disabilities bring to the table qualities such as commitment, productivity, talent and loyalty. It also tries to spread awareness amongst corporates that they should practice non-discrimination in the workplace, and ensure that it is barrier-free.

The fact that many companies and organisations have realised the economic benefits of employing people with disabilities, is evident from the increasing number of nominations that we receive each year. And while many of these corporates are implementing policies that are already in place globally, it is highly encouraging that others have developed and instituted their own disabled-friendly corporate policies.

As a supporter of the disability sector, we urge you to do your bit by influencing policy at your own workplace, opposing instances of discrimination, and persuading others to offer equal opportunity to people with disabilities.



Arman Ali

Executive Director
NCPEDP

Inclusivity is not merely a buzzword but the very cornerstone upon which a progressive society is built. It is a reflection of our commitment to equal opportunities, diversity, and the relentless pursuit of a fair and just world. The journey towards workplace equality for persons with disabilities in India is a path marked by both promise and barriers. The NCPEDP Helen Keller Awards began with a vision to start a discourse on equal opportunities for persons with disabilities in the area of employment at a time when no one was even thinking about it.

The current state of disabled persons in India's job market reveals a complex landscape of challenges and opportunities. Creating a genuinely inclusive workforce is a long-term goal, and it's illuminated by the extraordinary potential that disabled individuals bring to our society and the economy. Organisations, by embracing reasonable accommodations and nurturing an inclusive culture, have the power to unlock this untapped potential and help build a more inclusive India.

I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the awardees who have dedicated themselves to promoting employment for persons with disabilities. Your work is exemplary, and it sets the precedent for breaking down barriers and creating opportunities. I also extend my best wishes to all the nominees. Together, our work will further transform the narrative of disability employment in our country.

Let us challenge the status quo and move forward with determination and compassion, knowing that our collective efforts will lead to a more inclusive, self-reliant, and equitable India.



Debashis Chatterjee

Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director
LTIMindtree

Welcome to the 24th edition of the NCPEDP- LTIMindtree Helen Keller Awards. These awards exemplify our commitment to recognising individuals and organisations advancing equality and inclusion for people with disabilities in India.

At LTIMindtree, we are committed to a workplace that is welcoming for all. Our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) charters, programs, and initiatives remain focused on five key areas—Gender (Women), Nationality, LGBTQ+ inclusion, Veterans, and Persons with Disabilities. This purpose is not only shared through our business and the solutions we offer but also in the impact we have on those who depend on us: our customers, our employees, and our communities.

Diverse and inclusive teams not only exhibit higher levels of productivity and innovation but also possess superior problem-solving abilities. We recognise this is an ongoing journey and partnering with organisations like the National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP), who share our purpose, gives us the strength to do more.

The NCPEDP-LTIMindtree Helen Keller Awards honour and celebrate the champions of disability inclusion in India. We hope that their contributions will inspire us to redouble our commitment to forge a path towards a sustainable and equitable future.

Once again, a heartfelt gratitude to each of you for joining us on this journey. It is not an easy or a straightforward one, but it remains profoundly important for our workplace, our work, and our world.



Pradeep Gupta

Chairman
NCPEDP

In a world where employment opportunities can often be scarce and challenging for people with disabilities, the Helen Keller Awards stand as a beacon of hope and a testament to our unwavering dedication to promoting equal employment opportunities. As we enter the 24th edition of these prestigious awards, I am deeply humbled by the remarkable journey we've undertaken since their inception in 1999.

Our mission has remained steadfast: to honour individuals and organisations that have tirelessly worked to create job opportunities for people with disabilities and to inspire and share best practices globally. The increasing number of nominations we receive each year reflects the progress we've made. While the world is awakening to the importance of diverse and inclusive workspaces, there is still much work to do.

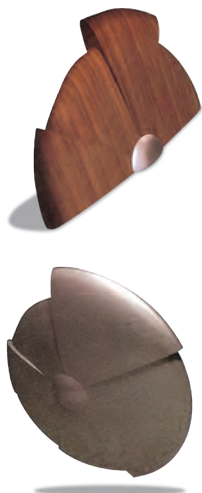
The challenges ahead are immense. We must continue to evolve our workspaces and their cultures to truly accommodate everyone's needs. Education and skill development remain pivotal in enhancing the employability of disabled individuals.

The remarkable work accomplished by our awardees over the years serves as a shining example of how we can harness the incredible capabilities of disabled individuals.

As a past recipient of the Helen Keller Award, I have personally experienced the profound impact it has on the lives of those it honours. These awards are not merely recognitions; they are celebrations of unwavering commitment and catalysts for positive change. My heartfelt congratulations to all the awardees of the NCPEDP-LTImindtree Helen Keller Awards 2023, and I am confident they will continue to inspire others as role models.

Together, let us uphold the legacy of Helen Keller and tirelessly strive to create a world where disability is not a hindrance but a unique strength that enriches our diverse workforce.

The NCPEDP-LTIMindtree Helen Keller Awards 2023



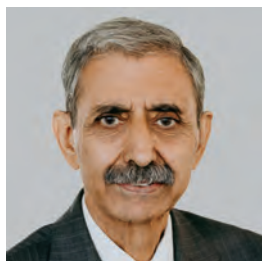
The story of the Helen Keller Awards dates back to 1999, making this the twenty fourth year of the Awards—a celebratory milestone of its journey. For over past two decades the Awards have not only led to a recognition of the exceptional work being done by corporates, NGOs and individuals—but have also emerged as a credible way to map the progress being made year by year towards greater dignity and empowerment of India's 70 million disabled citizens.

Over many years, these Awards have come to be recognised as the most prestigious Indian benchmark for honouring people and organisations that have worked towards a barrier-free, non-discriminatory and inclusive India. Though over the years many individuals and organisations have been honoured, two factors remain constant—one, the encouraging increase in the number of nominations that we receive each year; and two, the truly diverse nature of work being done by the Awardees (and indeed, all the nominees) in their respective fields. Both these facts suggest that India is well on her way of recognising disability as an issue that needs to be addressed.

As we celebrate this change, it is also appropriate to remind ourselves that the fight for equal rights, access and opportunity for people with disabilities is an ongoing one. There is still much that needs to be done.

Nevertheless, please join us in felicitating the 16 Awardees of 2023, as we share their inspiring and motivating journeys. Heartiest congratulations to them for overcoming myriad difficulties in making our country— its institutions and workplaces more accommodating and inclusive.

Award Jury 2023



Rakesh Jinsi – *Jury Chair*

President (Chairperson) SOS Children's Villages of India

An electrical engineer by education, he has worked extensively in the Automobile, Not for Profit and Education sectors. He has held leadership positions with organisations such as Eicher, Hero Motors, Chase Manhattan, Force Motors, Tatra Trucks, New Holland Fiat Tractors, SOS Children's Villages and School of Inspired Leadership. In Jan 2009, he proactively left the corporate world to work in the development sector with the objective of contributing to the Not-for-Profit sector. He has been a member of National level bodies such as the National Human Rights Commission, National Skill Development Corporation etc. He has served the boards of organisations such as Schaeffler India Ltd, Fairfield Atlas, Minda Automotive Solutions, Hero Motors, Hero Cycle etc apart from advising boards of a few large organisations. His current engagements include President (Chairperson) SOS Children's Villages of India, Member International Senate SOS Children's Villages International Austria, Advisor Shroff Charity Eye Hospital etc. He also works with small and medium-sized organisations as a business/management consultant, helping them to revive or scale up their business. He also engages with youth and Senior Executives as a Coach/Mentor on areas of leadership, domain, behavioural and Life skills.



Pratyush Kumar Panda

Principal Director, Environmental, Social, Governance, LTIMindtree

Pratyush is an ESG professional with 25 years of experience with L&T Group, Holcim Group, Vedanta Group, and Care International. Presently, he is serving as Head ESG at LTIMindtree. Some of his published articles are Net Zero in India, HR-CSR & Integration, Human Right Audits beyond Compliance, Social Audit in CSR, Community-based "Solid Waste Management", Taking sustainable living to India's grass root, Drought mitigation in Marathwada, #SaveKidsLives and Biodiversity for Industrial Sustainability have received many accolades and awards. In 2019, Pratyush has received the "Scroll of Honour" award from his alumni XIM-Bhubaneswar. He is a member of national committees like CII, BCCI, ICSI, and Net Zero Coalition in INDIA. He is also an ASPIRE Circle Fellow and 88th philanthropist to join the "LivingMyPromise" movement in India by committing 50% of his wealth towards environmental and social causes. He is a distance runner who has already run 57 Marathons and counting.



Namita Gautam

Director, Sheela Group of Companies

Professionally qualified in Corporate Law, Mrs. Namita Gautam has been a Whole Time Director of 'Sheela Foam Ltd' – the makers of the most trusted Mattress Brand 'Sleepwell' in India, since 1984. An experienced Human Resource Specialist with extensive knowledge in Training & Development, Project Management, Media, Communication, Marketing, Brand Building, and Product Development, she has held various positions in the Sleepwell Group of Companies including of Director of Human Resources, Director-Marketing, and Director-Projects. Mrs. Gautam has been spearheading the Corporate Social Responsibility activities of the Group through its Sleepwell Foundation, of which she is the Managing Trustee. Her strong conviction towards skilling of young girls led to the Company's adoption of Jijabai ITI for Women, Sirifort, Delhi, wherein she is the Chairperson of its Institute Management Committee.



Sandeep S Joshi

Chief Talent Officer, Jio-bp

Sandeep S Joshi is the Chief Talent Officer for Jio-bp. A joint venture of two iconic giants Reliance Industries and bp. Jio-bp aspires to be the solution provider of choice for mobility solutions in India. Sandeep is a chemical engineer and has done his post-graduation in HR from NMIMS. He is currently pursuing his DBA from SP Jain School of Global Management. He has worked with ABC Consultants, Infosys, and Reliance Industries in a career spanning 2 decades. Sandeep gets immense satisfaction in helping people succeed and in turn, contribute to the organisation's success.



Sarbani Chakravarty

Director, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)

Sarbani as Director, CII leads the Development Initiatives vertical in the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and is the Convener of the India Business and Disability Network. She has been working for over 15 years in different areas in CII with a focus on engaging and advocating for industry action towards inclusion and development - which includes Rural Development; Women Empowerment; Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities; and enabling impactful CSR programs. Prior to CII, she took a three-year stint as a Young Professional Fellowship program under the Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India. She is a Postgraduate in Rural Management and an Honours graduate from the Calcutta University.



Shalini Khanna

Chairperson, Skill Council for Persons with Disabilities

Shalini Khanna is the Founding Director of the National Association for the Blind, India's Centre for Blind Women and Disability Studies in New Delhi and also the present Chairperson of Skill Council for Persons with Disabilities. She has worked as a disability rehabilitation and research professional for over two decades specifically for women with visual impairment. In the last 20 years, the NAB India Centre for Blind Women has directly supported more than 24000 disabled women and children to access higher education, gain employment, and become self-reliant, through its training, awareness programmes and community outreach. Besides, she has been instrumental in bringing 2 international training programmes for the visually impaired to the country in recent years. Over the years, the Centre and particularly Ms. Shalini Khanna Sodhi has been conferred with many awards for her contribution to the Empowerment of Blind Women.



Naveen Shah

CMD, National Divyangjan Finance and Development Corporation

Naveen Kumar Shah, an accomplished Indian Forest Service (IFS) officer, currently serves as the Chairman cum Managing Director of the National Divyangjan Finance and Development Corporation (NDFDC), holding the position of Joint Secretary in the Government of India. With a diverse and illustrious career, he has demonstrated his expertise in various roles. His extensive experience in the Government of India spans from 2018 to the present, where he has served as Director and Joint Secretary. Prior to this, he contributed significantly to the administration of the Government of Jammu & Kashmir, serving as the Conservator of Forest and holding various other designated posts from 2002 to 2018.

Category A

Role Model Persons with Disabilities

Awardees Names

Ummer Farook KK

Dr. Vaibhav Bhandari

Dr. Rajalakshmi SJ





Ummer Farook KK

Founder and Chairman of the Lakshadweep
Differently Abled Welfare Association (LDWA)

U.T. of Lakshadweep

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Ummer Farook, the Founder and Chairman of the Lakshadweep Differently Abled Welfare Association (LDWA), is a beacon of inspiration in the remote Lakshadweep islands. Overcoming personal physical challenges, he pursued education in Kerala at a time when local parents were hesitant to send their disabled children to school. Returning to his community, Farook catalysed the formation of LDWA in 2011, championing the rights of persons with disabilities. As Chairman, he successfully unified the members of the community, collaborating with the Union Territory Administration to channelise benefits and establish awareness programs, disability certificate camps, and daycare centres. Recognised for his leadership, Farook serves on the State-level Advisory Committee and the District Management Team since 2017, playing a vital role in shaping policies for the disabled. His impact extends to government service as a Liaison Officer, guiding individuals in obtaining disability certificates and rehabilitation. Farook's visionary approach led to the creation of Chakkara, a centre for Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled, on his native island of Androth in 2020. Acknowledging his influential role, the Navy Officers Welfare Association supports LDWA's initiatives, furthering Farook's mission to create a more inclusive environment for the Persons with Disabilities across the Lakshadweep islands.

CATEGORY A AWARDEES



Dr. Vaibhav Bhandari

Founder - Swavlamban Foundation

Rajasthan

vaibhav.behappy@gmail.com

Dr. Vaibhav Bhandari, an esteemed clinical psychologist and legal advisor from Pali, Rajasthan, stands as a fervent advocate for individuals with disabilities and rare diseases. His exceptional dedication has garnered national, state, and district-level accolades, including the prestigious “National Award for Individual Excellence PwD” presented by the President of India. Dr. Bhandari’s impactful initiatives, such as the Asia Book of Records - listed 2022 Children’s Fair in Pali, underscores his tangible contributions. Rooted in Pali, his expertise in both legal and clinical psychology, evident through his disability-focused Ph.D. and clinical psychology diploma, is channelled via the Swavlamban Foundation, offering free camps providing prosthetic limbs, assistive devices, and inclusive excursions. Dr. Bhandari’s advocacy extends to policy reforms, fostering wheelchair accessibility in Rajasthan’s government institutions and amending the Motor Vehicle Act for improved mobility on state buses. Through Disability Awareness seminars in schools, empowering employment initiatives, and fostering independence through craft sales by PwD students, Dr. Vaibhav Bhandari embodies an unwavering commitment to breaking barriers and transforming the lives of those with disabilities and rare diseases.



Dr. Rajalakshmi SJ

Associate Professor at Government Dental College
and Research Institute; Chairperson of SJ Foundation
Trust and Proprietor, S J Dental Square

Karnataka

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She is an embodiment of resilience and accomplishment across numerous spheres. A wheelchair user, she stands as a Gold Medalist Doctor in Dentistry, excelling as a Professor, Sports Champion, Fashion Model, Social worker, and Motivational Speaker, boasting international and national accolades in para table tennis. Her life took a pivotal turn at 21 due to a road accident, leading to spinal cord injury and a life as a wheelchair user. From securing titles like Miss India-Wheelchair 2014 to winning Miss World-Wheelchair Popularity 2017 on a global platform, She has forged her path as an Associate Professor at Government Dental College, overseeing her dental clinic, and delving into Psychology, Fashion Designing, and Vedic Yoga. Her endeavours extend to advocating for disability rights through the S J Foundation Trust, which she is running as Chairperson. She has organised impactful events, championed legal battles, conducted dental camps, and has also served as a WHO-certified peer trainer. She has been honoured with national awards, including recognition by the President of India, her journey transcends borders, impacting 20 countries as a TEDx and INK speaker. Her remarkable story finds a place in the World Book of Records as a Power Woman, inspiring societal understanding and fostering inclusivity for the disabled community.

Category B

*Role Model Supporter of Increased Employment
Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities*

Awardees Names

Dr. Rajdeep Manwani

Prateek Madhav

Ashwin Kumar V

Jury Appreciation

Amali Naik





Dr. Rajdeep Manwani

Head of Research, Sindhi College
Karnataka

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Dr. Rajdeep Manwani, a distinguished advocate for Diversity and Inclusion, has made an enduring impact on equal employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Leveraging extensive experience, he devised and executed impactful disability sensitisation workshops, fostering collaborations with prominent industries and educational institutions. His committed partnerships with various disability organisations underscore a dedicated pursuit of tangible change. Notably, his influential contributions encompass pioneering job-focused training programs; most notably, he played a pivotal role in the “Tech for All” employability initiative, successfully training over 200 blind students in office and bank management skills. Through his involvement with the Rotary initiative CLAP, Dr. Manwani extended his expertise to visually impaired individuals in Bangalore, emphasising leadership and soft skill development. Additionally, he established a platform for the visually impaired to exhibit their talents, organising innovative events like quiz competitions tailored for them. Dr. Manwani’s authored research papers on disability and inclusion have inspired students to pursue professional courses in chartered accountancy and company secretaryship. As an award-winning catalyst for social change, he exemplifies empowerment for people with disabilities, epitomising the ethos of ‘touching lives and making a difference’.



Prateek Madhav

CEO & Co-Founder, AssisTech Foundation (ATF)

Karnataka

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Prateek Mahadev, currently serving as the CEO and Co-Founder of ATF, is crafting India's largest Assistive Technology (AT) innovation ecosystem, comprising 450+ startups. Under his leadership, ATF impacted the lives of 510,000 individuals with disabilities, fostering 42 AT startups, developing over 100 products, and securing 43 patents. His efforts including co-founding the Global Alliance on Assistive Technology Innovations and Investments solidifies his commitment to global inclusivity. His passion for startups, marathon running, and music underscores a profound dedication to finding beauty and meaning in life's simpler joys amidst life's intricacies. He is a Jaipur-born individual educated at NIT and IIM Calcutta, underwent a transformative journey from a corporate digital technology leader to a fulfilled social entrepreneur, relinquishing an 18-year career in the IT industry. His tenure at Accenture's Global Analytics team showcased his pivotal role in driving digital innovation, AI, and new service offerings, but his unwavering belief in technology's potential for people with disabilities led him to transition. As CEO of Samarthanam Trust for the Disabled, he achieved a remarkable 40% year-on-year growth and global expansion, marking a significant chapter in his career.



Ashwin Kumar V

Technical Test Lead, Infosys Limited

Karnataka

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Ashwin is an accomplished Technical Test Lead at Infosys Limited with a wealth of experience spanning over two decades in graphic and UI design, coupled with six years of specialised expertise in QA engineering. His extensive background encompasses auditing websites, web applications, software, mobile apps, and electronic documents for accessibility compliance. Recognising the exponential growth and significance of Digital Accessibility Testing (DAT) in the software development industry, Ashwin identified the dearth of practical training options and consequently formulated a comprehensive 20-week training program in DAT. Collaborating with the esteemed non-profit organisation, VisionAid, and securing approvals from his current company, he serves as the core trainer on weekends, imparting invaluable knowledge and hands on experience to students possessing a Bachelor's degree and adeptness in computer skills, touchscreen devices, MS Office, and screen readers like NVDA and JAWS. His course structure seamlessly integrates theoretical concepts with live practice sessions, ensuring that graduate students are job ready. Offering internship projects as part of the curriculum, he has empowered over 100 students, with more than 50 successfully securing positions in leading IT firms. Ashwin's visionary goal is to foster a more inclusive digital landscape and cultivate a workplace environment that embraces accessibility as a cornerstone of best practices.



Jury Appreciation

Amali Naik

Executive Director,
Gramina Abyuday Seva Samsthe (GASS)
Karnataka

gass.amalinaik@gmail.com

She is the Co-founder and Executive Director of Gramina Abyuday Seva Samsthe (GASS), and has spearheaded a transformative journey since its establishment in 1996. Her contributions have led GASS to reach greater heights and empower marginalised rural communities across seven districts in Karnataka, catering to nearly 300,000 individuals, including those with disabilities. She has adopted a multifaceted approach encompassing education, healthcare, employment, and social security in her role as founder-director. GASS stands out for its commitment to skill development, evident in diverse initiatives such as the Bridge education centre, Arecanut leaf plates unit, tailoring units, and various livelihood activities within shelters for women, senior citizens, and individuals with mental health needs. Through initiatives such as Garv Se Centre, she has contributed immensely to a sustainable ecosystem for livelihood opportunities, especially for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). In addition to this, workshops, enabler committees at the village and panchayat levels, and influencer groups at the district level, GASS has successfully trained over 1,038 Persons with Disabilities, with a notable 85% placement rate across 40 activities, averaging a profit of Rs. 9,000. Additionally, 30 persons with disabilities were prepared for government jobs, with 90% participating in various government schemes, and 750 Persons with Disabilities were trained under MGNREGA, leading to an 80% placement rate across 25 different jobs. Her relentless efforts have not only empowered individuals but have also contributed significantly to sustainable rural development in Karnataka.

Category C

Role Model Companies/NGOs/Institution

Awardees Names

TVS Motor Company

Atypical Advantage

Amar Seva Sangam

Alamba Charitable Trust

Jury Appreciation

NatWest India

Mitti Social Initiatives Foundation





TVS Motor Company

Tamil Nadu

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TVS Motor Company is a reputed two and three-wheeler manufacturer globally, championing progress through Sustainable Mobility with four state-of-the-art manufacturing facilities in Hosur, Mysuru and Nalagarh in India and Karawang in Indonesia. Rooted in its 100-year legacy of Trust, Value, and Service, TVS Motor Company takes pride in making internationally aspirational products of the highest quality through innovative and sustainable processes. TVSM has always stood for innovative, easy-to-handle, and environment-friendly products, backed by reliable customer service, with an objective to bring smile to each customer looking for a mobility solution! Diversity, Equity and Inclusion as part of the Sustainable objective is taken passionately at the TVS Motor Company. Under the name INCLUVERSE (Inclusive-Universe), the Diversity & Inclusion at TVS Motor Company is aligned with the Mission and vision of the organisation. They have policies in place to ensure they are not only bringing disabled talent onboard, but also nurture and retain them for a bright future ahead. They started their journey in 2019 with 5 disabled Employees and today they are at approximately 230 persons with disabilities employees. This has only been possible with the success in the business imperative the organisation sees with diversity interventions.





Atypical Advantage

Jharkhand

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Atypical Advantage stands as India's premier Livelihood Platform dedicated to empowering Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) by offering comprehensive support in securing employment and fostering inclusivity within corporate spaces. Their platform serves as an end-to-end solution, addressing the gaps between the supply and demand sides, thereby creating an equitable environment where PwDs can earn a dignified income. Through partnerships with over 170 corporate clients, 200+ NGOs, and 50+ colleges, they've facilitated avenues for full-time jobs, freelance opportunities in performing arts, and the sale of artworks/gift items, directly impacting over 2000 disabled persons by providing them with sustainable livelihoods. Their impactful presence has been recognised nationwide, evidenced by their iconic pitch on Shark Tank India, drawing applause from millions of viewers, and extensive media coverage. With an unwavering commitment, they aim to extend their reach and impact by setting an ambitious goal to generate livelihood opportunities for at least 1 million individuals with disabilities over the next decade. Already collaborating with 170+ multinational corporations, they are dedicated to leveraging these partnerships to achieve this monumental objective, further championing inclusivity and empowerment for PwDs across India.





Amar Seva Sangam

Tamil Nadu

secretary.amar@amarseva.org

Amar Seva Sangam's Vocational Training Center (VTC) strives to foster independence and sustainable livelihoods for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) through specialised training programs. With a priority on disabled persons, the centre currently has 44 physically challenged employees out of a total staff strength of 487, including individuals who have undergone successful rehabilitation in their Post-Acute Care Centre for Spinal Injuries. Their diverse vocational training curriculum encompasses fields like tailoring, handicrafts, typewriting, computer/information technology, home-appliances servicing, and gold appraiser servicing. They are an accredited centre for various courses such as Computer Operator and Program Assistant, Desktop Publishing Operators, Cutting & Sewing, and Smart Phone Technician cum App Tester, along with offering a Diploma in Early Childhood Special Education & Certificate Course in Care Giving approved by Rehabilitation Council of India. Through the Village Based Rehabilitation Initiative-Development (VBRI-D) program, they have impacted over 15,000 PwDs, particularly empowering more than 5,030 women with disabilities in self-help groups within villages, providing them with education, skill development, and opportunities for livelihood. Moreover, their advocacy efforts led to seminal contributions, including a national-level seminar that catalysed the enactment of the Persons with Disabilities Act in 1996. Notably, they spearheaded a policy initiative in Tamil Nadu, collaborating with The World Bank for a State-Wide Program set to benefit over 100,000 Children with Disabilities (CWDs) over the next 5 years, reinforcing their commitment to fostering inclusivity, equal access, and a barrier-free environment for all.



CATEGORY C AWARDEES



Alamba Charitable Trust

Karnataka

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Alamba Charitable Trust proudly champions equal employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Over their 18-year journey, they've empowered 3450 disabled youths, addressing a spectrum of challenges, including physical disabilities, speech and hearing impairments. Their holistic approach encompasses counselling, motivation, training, placements, and healthcare. Their personalised post-placement support, catering to the unique needs of each beneficiary truly sets them apart. Taking inclusivity further, the Alamba Chethana residential centre, a pioneering initiative for Spinal Cord Injured youths, stands as a testament to their commitment. In collaboration with Neo Motion Pvt. Ltd. and Zomato, their project not only fosters livelihood but also instils newfound hope. Witnessing individuals confidently navigate their Neo bolt motorised wheels on the road symbolises their unwavering dedication to equal employment opportunities, transforming challenges into smiles of triumph.





Jury Appreciation

NatWest India

Haryana

sheetal.bathija@natwest.com

NatWest India, a vital component of the NatWest Group, epitomises a relationship-oriented bank tailored for the digital age. Embracing the ethos of championing potential and fostering financial confidence, their core value revolves around inclusion, nurturing a culture where individuals feel empowered to authentically express themselves, assured of unwavering support. Over the recent years, NatWest India has undertaken various initiatives dedicated to fostering inclusion for their employees with disabilities. Their endeavours include 'GO-ENABLE,' an exclusive recruitment drive in collaboration with agencies such as Atypical Advantage, Youth4jobs, and V-shesh. Additionally, the 'GO - ENABLE Referral program' encourages diversity through employee referrals, while the deployment of approximately 100 'Inclusive Interview Ambassadors' ensures equitable consideration for PwD candidates. They provide ergonomically designed furniture, adjustable desks, and various accessibility aids like emergency systems, tactile elements, braille-enabled switches, ramps, and specialised health & safety assessments. Extensive health and assistive technology, including software and hardware adaptations, support employees with different impairments. Their initiatives extend further, encompassing diagnosis supports, workplace adjustments, assistive technology provision, coaching for neurodiverse employees, well-being assistance through WellConnect, and career development via Aspire and mentorship programs. Monitoring metrics like PwD attrition, performance ratings, employee engagement scores, pay equity, and hiring data, are diligently taken into consideration for strategic measures. Moreover, their Employee Led Network of disabled persons fosters a community of volunteers and allies, championing inclusivity within their organisation. Through these collective efforts, NatWest continues to be recognised as a Great Place to Work, committed to nurturing an environment where everyone can thrive.





Jury Appreciation

Mitti Social Initiatives Foundation

Karnataka

alina@mitticafe.org

MITTI Social Initiatives Foundation stands as a transformative force dedicated to advancing equal employment prospects for people with disabilities (PWDs). Rooted in a deep belief in the untapped potential of individuals with disabilities, it has become a catalyst for reshaping societal attitudes and fostering inclusive livelihoods. At the heart of its vision lies the pioneering MITTI Cafe, now spanning five major cities in India. Strategically situated in corporate offices, educational institutions, airports, and hospitals, these cafes transcend mere culinary experiences to become potent platforms for inclusivity and empowerment. Going beyond conventional hospitality, it actively engages in experiential training programs, nurturing team members with diverse skill sets encompassing culinary prowess and customer service expertise. This holistic approach not only enhances employability within the Cafe but also the wider job market, pivotal in dismantling barriers and reshaping societal perceptions about the capabilities of PWDs. Amidst the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, its commitment to social responsibility shone brightly through the Karuna Meals initiative. Crafted and distributed by individuals with disabilities, MITTI Karuna Meals became a vital support system for economically vulnerable communities. Through Mitti Good Gifts, the foundation facilitates corporate gifting with purposefully curated hampers, empowering PWDs and fostering inclusion. With a remarkable legacy of serving over 11 million meals, transforming lives, distributing millions of Karuna Meals during the pandemic, and establishing 40 cafes, including the recent inauguration at the Supreme Court of India, it continues its impactful journey.



Category

Role Model Entrepreneurs with Disabilities

Awardees Names

Krishnakant Mane

Sumarty G

Rakhi Pandey





Krishnakant Mane

Founder-Director and CTO of
Bookmatic Pvt. Ltd.

Maharashtra

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Krishnakant Mane is a Founder-Director and CTO of Bookmatic Pvt. Ltd., whose groundbreaking contributions have left an indelible mark on the landscape of inclusive technology. As the first visually impaired IT professional in India and one of only three in Asia in 2003, Krishnakant has emerged as a dynamic force in the domains of Fintech, EdTech, and Agrotech. His endeavour, OnlineKhata, stands as India's premier accounting automation software for small businesses and rural enterprises, uniquely tailored to be fully accessible to screen readers, thus unlocking opportunities for visually impaired individuals in the realm of commerce. Beyond his entrepreneurial endeavours, Krishnakant has led transformative projects such as "True Vision" for the Electronic Corporation of Tamil Nadu, training over 15,000 blind graduates and paving the way for their integration into government and private jobs. His global influence extends to advising the government of Malaysia on inclusive IT education, emphasising open-source technologies. A seasoned TED speaker, Krishnakant has graced prestigious platforms, shedding light on the social implications of inclusive technology. As one of the earliest contributors to the Orca free screen reader, funded by Sun Microsystems, for the open-source Ubuntu operating system, he has played a pivotal role in advancing accessibility in the digital realm. Krishnakant's entrepreneurial journey is more than a career—it's a mission. His passion for inclusive technology fuels a commitment to serving the digitally underserved, making him a true catalyst for positive change in the tech industry.



Sumarty G

Business Owner, Sadaf Spices

Jammu & Kashmir

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Sumarty's entrepreneurial prowess shines through her successful venture focused on selling distinctive spices native to the Kashmir valley, notably the renowned Kashmiri red chilli powder. What sets her apart is not just her business acumen but the resilience to establish her enterprise without relying on emotional or financial support from others. Her story is one of tenacity, blending the cultural richness of Kashmir with the determination to overcome obstacles. Sumarty's profile is a testament to the indomitable spirit that fuels her journey, making her an inspiring figure in both business and sports.



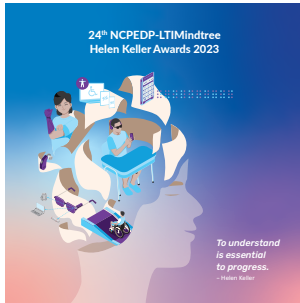
Rakhi Pandey

Proprietor, Paridhan Boutique

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Rakhi Pandey, proprietor of Paridhan Boutique situated in Shalimar Garden, Ghaziabad is dedicated to providing bespoke tailoring services exclusively for women, including the unique service of crafting coordinating outfits for mothers and their infants. Her staff members include 2 disabled persons out of a total of 7 employees. Rakhi's boutique is renowned for offering the latest designs and expert alteration consultations, ensuring impeccable fits for clients. Notably, she extends her tailoring services to cater specifically to females with disabilities, overseeing measurements to alleviate any challenges they may encounter elsewhere. Rakhi Pandey initiated a strategic collaboration with Needle & Thimble Cloud Tailoring Services in 2020, broadening the boutique's clientele to include East Delhi, Sahibabad, and Noida, covering a radius of 20 Km from the boutique. Beyond her entrepreneurial pursuits, Rakhi actively engages in wheelchair modelling and participates in marathons, proudly aligning herself with the Eagle Specially Abled Rider's Group. In the future, she aspires to expand her business further by starting and running her own cloud tailoring business to further foster employment amongst disabled persons.



Brochure Concept

This year's Awards brochure is inspired by Helen Keller's timeless words, "Understanding is essential to progress," which suggest that the first step towards making a positive change is simply to understand with an open mind. This empathetic approach leads to focussed efforts in making reasonable accommodation, leading to a more accessible and inclusive world.

The cover illustration shows an individual's mind that is solution-driven and showcases various manifestations of reasonable accommodations in the form of assistive devices that can hugely impact the lives of persons with disabilities.



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