



1 ,January 2004

To

Dr K. Gopal IAS,
MD,
Tamil Nadu Text Book Corporation.

Dear Sir,

Sub: Requesting free distribution of School text books in Braille format for visually impaired students.

Nethrodaya is a social service organization dedicated to the welfare of the visually impaired community in Tamil Nadu, which is been recognized by Government of TamilNadu award for the "Best Institution 2012" in recognition of its outstanding services towards the differently abled persons. Our interventions are designed to elevate the standard of living of the visually challenged in all walks of life and to assist them with the latest technology and assistive devices to enable them to lead a trouble free life.

We here with submitting the detailed proposal of need for School text books in Braille format for visually impaired students for your kind perusal.

Kindly do the needful at the earliest.

Thanking you

For Nethrodaya

C. Govindakrishnan

Founder

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PROJECT REPORT

**ESTABLISHMENT OF BRAILLE PRINTING UNIT
UNDER TAMILNADU TEXT BOOK CORPORATION**

Prepared By

NETHRODAYA

SELF - HELP ORGANIZATION FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED

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Introduction About Visual Impairment

Visual Impairment is a very serious problem to the people who are experiencing it in their day to day life. If anybody's vision is affected, he is considered to be blind. For him the world is dark, he/she is totally disappointed and he always depends on others for all his activities in his day to day life. Visual Impairment also reduces mobility to a large extent. Visual Impairment makes a person sharpen his other senses whereby he is able to fulfill his social obligations. Visual Impairment is not a disease. It is a Physical disability. The only remedy recommended is to give them empathy not sympathy.

Visual impairment poses a great challenge in the day to day life of the affected person. Though not a disease, it is a physical disability with the social stigma for the person concerned as well as his family. Indeed, the term "blind" is used in a derogatory manner by a society that refuse to look beyond the disability, to acknowledge or encourage the capabilities of the individual. Visual impairment reduces mobility, in the person is totally depended on others for his day to day activities; however, this results in the sharpening of his other senses and skills, whereby he is able to fulfill his social obligations.

1. The current scenario

In India there are approximately 25 million blind people who constitute one – fifth of the world's population of the blind. 60% of the world's blind reside in China, (7-10 million) and about 7 million in sub-saharan Africa.

Each year, an estimate half a million children go blind, out of whom upto 60% die in childhood. In addition to being a public health problem, visual impairment has important socio-economic implications. In India, for instance, the aggregated cost of this disability to the national economic in 1989 was estimated at approximately U.S \$ 4.6 Billion per year.

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According to the statistical data collected, it is founded that there are 16, 42,497 differently abled persons in Tamilnadu and out of which 9,64,063 are visually impaired persons.

2. The policy support

The People with Disabilities Act, 1995, is the legal measure, which enable to get equal rights and opportunities to the disabled. The Act is a progressive and comprehensive one, which contains all types of legal provisions and protection to the disabled. However individually governments have executed the act with their own modifications. Governmental provisions for the visually impaired

The State Government has introduced the following programs for the benefit of the visually impaired;

- a) State-run special schools, State-sponsored special schools and private special schools have been established to educate the blind.
- b) Periodic scholarship schemes along with material requirements like school uniforms, books and Braille equipments are provided.
- c) Special training is provided to teachers to enable them to teach the visual impairment students.
- d) Technical education and employment schemes.
- e) Schemes offering incentives to people who marry blind individuals.
- f) Concessions in bus and train travel.
- g) Schemes for national and state awards for excellence social service, implementation for visual impaired.

However, there is need for more such programs to redress, urgently, the needs of the visually impaired in our society – Eg. No schools fully equipped, improved

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facilities in hostel, user-friendly infrastructure designed for the visual impaired etc. Beside provisions should be made to create more opportunities and explore new avenues for employment.

It would be relevant to mention that in TamilNadu, the people with disabilities act is not fully implemented because of an existing clause that no financial provisions can be made for the same by the state government.

3. Major Challenges of Visually Impaired Population Seeking Education And Career Within the State

The visually impaired persons from poor family background will often face a lot of problems in the state.

A. Supports Up to 12th Standard

The Child belongs to a family that is living in financially straitened circumstances. Being one of several siblings, he is considered a burden and is thus totally neglected by his family, and shunned by the society. The very people from whom he should derive encouragement and support are instrumental in hampering his further development regardless of his capabilities.

However, if fortune favors him, he is able, with help of NGOs and well wishers to get in touch with the Resource Center in the city nearest to his village. He is then referred to an institution for the blind. Till the 12th standard, he is provided free accommodation and food which are sponsored by charitable organizations and individuals.

B. Academic

- Inadequate infrastructure for students with special needs in schools (E.g Desk large enough to accommodate Braille slates, electrical plug points for DVD players etc)
- Difficulties in commuting

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- Lack of resource persons who could help students gain knowledge and develop skills in special areas
- Lack of proper venue to meet readers
- Lack of access to Braille study material
- Lack of career guidance and counseling

Despite the enormous hurdles he has had to overcome. The student is able to graduate, more often than not, with high percentage marks. Teaching is the choice vocation of most students, and the majority takes up History or Linguistics with this end in view. This means that the avenues for employment are narrowed down, and therefore saturated.

4. Importance of Braille School Text Books

It is estimated that there are about 16, 42,497 differently abled persons in Tamilnadu and out of which 9,64,063 are visually impaired persons. It is sad to notice that there are only 1650 visually impaired students are pursuing school education including the 650 in special schools, 500 in SSA and 500 in IEDSS. Only 10,500 visually impaired persons have registered in Employment Exchange and as on date there are only 2432 visually impaired persons employed in government sector. The root cause for this trend is the non-availability of free Braille school text books for the visually impaired school students. If the society desires to secure the right to education to the visually impaired students, a massive and speedy action has to be taken to provide free Braille text books to all visually impaired school students in Tamilnadu on a war footing.

Braille text books will provide an effective platform for the visually impaired to practice writing and independent reading of texts and be thorough with the spellings and punctuation marks.

5. Existing Braille Printing in Tamilnadu

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At present there are only 2 institutions in Tamilnadu who are running Braille printing press viz National Institute for Visually Handicapped, Regional Center, Chennai and Ramakrishna Vidyalaya, Coimbatore. NIVH has a full fledged Braille printing unit and supplies to various institutions across the state. However, these Braille books are not made available completely free of cost. There is an urgent need to arrange to print these school text books in Braille format by the State Government by opening a separate Braille printing unit exclusively for visually impaired school students in Tamilnadu under the super vision of Tamilnadu Text Book Corporation. Where the Tamilnadu Text Book Corporation is already providing the school text books for general school students by printing lakhs of copies.

6. Our Appeal

As Braille is an effective and empowering tool for the visually impaired students, learning of Braille must be made compulsory in all standards in schools, by the State Education department. This will motivate the students to use Braille for reading and writing and this skill is essential survival skill for the visually impaired students. If State government arranges to supply free Braille school text books to all the visually impaired school students, the literacy rate among visually impaired population will improve significantly and more and more visually impaired persons will come forward willingly to get educated and more and more visually impaired will get good jobs in future. The State Government has already been providing free school text books to general school students in government schools, which is a laudable step. We therefore, appeal to the state Government to arrange to open a separate Braille printing unit for printing the school text books in Braille format and distribute these free books to all the visually impaired school students in Tamilnadu through Tamilnadu Textbook Corporation.

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7. Conclusion

Braille is a highly effective educational tool for the visually impaired students placing them at par with the general students. Braille text books play a crucial role in the performance of the students in understanding the subjects thoroughly and help them to get good marks in examinations. This essential skill makes them self-reliant and enables them to lead a dignified life. The two-pronged strategy of making it compulsory to learn Braille in all standards for visually impaired students and providing free Braille text books will have significant improvement in literacy and all-round development of the visually impaired population in Tamilnadu.

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