



# A Handbook for Persons with Visual Impairments who will obtain a job in the formal sector

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*Supported by*



**The Nippon Foundation**

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## Introduction

Job opportunities in the formal sector for visually impaired individuals are still very minimal. This situation certainly deserves attention, given that job opportunities in the formal sector are a basic human right. There are three series of handbooks designed to promote job opportunities for visually impaired individuals in the formal sector.

The first series is a handbook for visually impaired individuals who want to work in the formal sector; the second series is a guidebook for employers who hire visually impaired individuals; and the third series is a handbook for parents as part of the support system preparing their visually impaired kids for formal employment.

The first series of handbooks focuses on important factors that can determine a visually impaired individual's ability to work in the formal sector. There are eight topics discussed in eight chapters, including building self-concept, building motivation, empowerment and capacity enhancement, mentoring, networking and social media activity, family as a support system, overcoming challenges and problem-solving, and successful stories from visually impaired individuals in the workplace.

The compilation of these three series of guidebooks is not separate from the results of a collaborative study on “The Keys to Success for Persons with Visual Impairments Working in the Formal Sector” conducted in 2024 in three countries (Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam) by Mitra Netra Foundation, Resource for the Blind Inc. (RBI), and Sao Mai for the Blind. This study received full support from the Nippon Foundation.

We hope that this handbook will not be of limited benefit only for the three target groups (visually impaired individuals, employers, and parents), but also for all other stakeholders, including disability rights activists and academics who are interested in the issue of employment for visually impaired individuals in the formal sector. This is expected to be only the first series of handbooks we develop to serve as inspiration for visually impaired individuals to strengthen their resolve to work in the formal sector. This concludes our introduction, and we wish you all the best in using this handbook as a reference. Enjoy the book and happy reading.

## Chapter 1

# DEVELOPING SELF-CONCEPT

Currently, there are quite a lot of blind people who feel that they are employed simply because the companies/institutions pity them. These feelings may arise due to numerous experiences where they were stigmatized and discriminated against, leading to a drop in their self-confidence. The loss of self-confidence is a sign that one has not developed a positive self-concept.

In the world of work, such a lack of self-confidence often results in a reluctance to show one's abilities. This is one of the findings from research conducted in three countries by the Mitra Netra (Indonesia), RBI (Philippines), and Sao Mai (Vietnam) cooperation institutions.

The results of the study also revealed that knowing yourself is a crucial step, after which, of course, we would have a better understanding of the potential that we have, which will later be relevant to the career we aspire to.

### 1.1. Definition of Self-Concept

Self-concept can be defined as the collection of beliefs and perceptions that individuals have about themselves, which significantly impact their identity, self-image, and self-esteem.<sup>1</sup> For individuals with visual impairments, there are a few key points worth noting:

- The inability to see can lead to feelings of isolation and bring challenges in social interactions, which can negatively impact self-perception. However, positive social experiences and support can foster a healthier self-concept.
- Individuals with visual impairments may face unique challenges in forming their self-concept, often feeling less competent than their sighted peers. However, with the right support and encouragement, they can develop a strong sense of self-worth and self-confidence.
- Family support and social interactions play a significant role in shaping the self-concept of individuals with visual impairments. Engaging in activities that highlight their strengths can lead to a more positive self-image.

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<sup>1</sup> Weissa, Izhak, Hefziba Lifshitz, and Irit Hen. Self-concept, Adjustment to Blindness, and Quality of Friendship Among Adolescents with Visual Impairments, *JVIB*, Vol.101No.1, February 2007, August 15, retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ755445.pdf>

## 1.2. How to develop self-concept?

Several strategies can be implemented based on research findings and best practices to develop a positive self-concept in persons with visual impairments. Here are some effective approaches:

1. Encourage individuals to accept their visual impairment as part of their identity. Acknowledging both strengths and limitations can foster a more balanced self-view. Engaging in activities that highlight their abilities can help reinforce a positive self-image.
2. Facilitate opportunities for social engagement with peers and mentors. Positive social experiences can significantly influence self-concept, helping visually impaired individuals feel more connected and valued in their communities.
3. Involve people with visual impairments in various activities, such as sports, arts, or community service, to help build skills and confidence. These experiences allow individuals to showcase their talents and capabilities, contributing to a stronger self-concept.
4. Create supportive educational and social environments where visually impaired individuals can thrive. This includes access to resources, adaptive technologies, and trained professionals who understand their unique needs.
5. Use positive reinforcement to acknowledge achievements and efforts. This can help individuals recognize their progress and capabilities, fostering a sense of accomplishment and enhancing self-esteem.
6. Encourage self-reflection through discussions about personal experiences and feelings. This practice can help individuals articulate their thoughts and develop a clearer understanding of their identity and self-worth.
7. Provide education about visual impairments to help individuals better understand their condition and reduce feelings of isolation. Knowledge can empower them to advocate for themselves and seek necessary support.
8. Teach individuals to advocate for their needs and rights. Developing self-advocacy skills can enhance their confidence and ability to navigate various situations effectively, contributing to a more positive self-concept.



### 1.3 How to determine future work sector and carrier purposing

Several approaches can be used to identify a good company and career path for people with visual impairments, taking into consideration their special talents, interests, and required accommodations. This methodology is predicated on the search results:

#### 1. Evaluate Skills and Interests

- Have conversations with people to learn about their passions and interests. This might assist in matching their preferred activities with employment opportunities. For instance, because they involve people or are creative, jobs in humanity, education, counselling, or social work may be intriguing to many visually impaired people.
- Perform evaluations to determine technical and soft abilities, such as problem-solving and communication. Choosing the right professional route can be aided by being aware of their strengths.

#### 2. Take Accommodations into Account

- Recognise what modifications to the workplace might be required to support job performance. This can involve adapted workspaces or assistive devices like braille displays or screen readers.
- Encourage the discussion of any necessary accommodations with prospective employers. Many employers are willing to make accommodations that will enable people with vision impairments to succeed in their jobs.

#### 3. Seek Education and Training:

- Encourage them to seek out vocational training or education that corresponds with their interests in each field of work. This could entail enrolling in soft skills training and courses that emphasize competencies pertinent to their intended field.

#### 4. Build a Career Plan

- Build a career plan that details objectives, possible career paths, and the procedures necessary help to reach those objectives. Examples, such as timelines for schooling/higher education, skill development, and job searches may fall under this category.
- Encourage regular career plan evaluations to accommodate shifting employment demands, skill requirements, and interests.

**5. Deal with Employment Barriers**

- Make persons with visual impairments aware of their rights under the Convention on The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which requires employers to make reasonable accommodations for visually impaired workers.
- Try to debunk misconceptions the employers may have about the abilities and talents of people with visual impairments.
- Raise awareness and educate the public to help improve the employment prospects of people with visual impairments.

## Chapter 2

# DEVELOPING MOTIVATION

The role of parents is vital to motivating people with visual disabilities to pursue their dreams, especially careers in the world of work. It is undeniable that parents can be significant motivators for people with visual disabilities to support their children's progress.

In some cases, apart from external factors (such as family and other people), motivation also comes from within the person with visual disabilities. Life experiences that include several challenges in facing their surroundings can spur them to move forward and work.

This chapter will explore the definition, types, and scope of motivation in the context of people with visual disabilities entering the formal workforce.

### 2.1 Definition of motivation

Motivation refers to the internal and external factors that drive individuals to pursue goals, overcome challenges, and engage in various activities, particularly in educational and professional contexts.<sup>2</sup> The concept of motivation in the demographic of persons with visual impairments can be influenced by several key elements:

1. Self-efficacy, or the belief in her/their abilities to succeed, plays a crucial role in motivating visually impaired individuals. Higher self-efficacy can lead to increased persistence in educational settings and a greater likelihood of pursuing higher education degrees despite the challenges that may arise.
2. Intrinsic factors, such as personal interests and the desire for self-improvement, are significant motivators for visually impaired individuals. These individuals often find motivation in the pursuit of

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<sup>2</sup> Jones, Chris. (2018). Motivation of Students with Visual Impairments or Blindness to Pursue a Higher Education Degree. ERIC, 2018, August 16, retrieved from [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url\\_ver=Z39.88-2004&rft\\_val\\_fmt=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:dissertation&res\\_dat=xri:pqm&rft\\_dat=xri:pqdiss:13422305](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&rft_val_fmt=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:dissertation&res_dat=xri:pqm&rft_dat=xri:pqdiss:13422305)



knowledge and personal growth, which can enhance their engagement in educational and career-related activities.

3. External support from family, peers, and mentors can significantly increase motivation. Encouragement and assistance from these networks can help individuals navigate challenges and maintain their drive to achieve their goals.
4. Many visually impaired individuals face barriers to education and employment, such as accessibility issues and societal misconceptions. Successfully overcoming these barriers can serve as a strong motivator, reinforcing their determination to pursue their aspirations.
5. Establishing clear, achievable goals can enhance motivation. When individuals with visual impairments set specific objectives for their education or career, they are more likely to remain focused and motivated to achieve them.

## **2.2. What motivates oneself to work in the formal sector?**

Here are some key factors that can motivate persons with a visual impairment to work in the formal sector:

### **1. Intrinsic Motivation**

- Having a job provides financial independence and the ability to support oneself, which can be a strong motivator.
- Finding a career that aligns with one's interests and values can provide a sense of purpose and fulfilment.

### **2. External Factors**

- Having a strong support system that believes in one's abilities and encourages pursuing career goals can be highly motivating.
- Seeing others with visual impairments thrive in the formal sector can inspire and motivate individuals to pursue similar paths.
- Knowing that a workplace is accessible and accommodating to one's needs can make the prospect of employment more appealing and attainable.

### **3. Overcoming Barriers**

- Pursuing a career in the formal sector can be a way to challenge negative stereotypes and prove one's capabilities.
- Overcoming barriers and achieving career goals can be highly motivating and empowering for individuals with visual impairments.
- Working in the formal sector can provide a platform to advocate for equal employment opportunities and accessibility for others with visual impairments.

## **2.3. How can motivation to work in the formal sector be developed and maintained?**

Maintaining motivation to work in the formal sector for persons with visual impairment involves a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Relevant references confirm some strategies below that help individuals with a visual impairment stay motivated:

### **1. Intrinsic Motivation**

- Engage in work that aligns with personal interests and passions. This can help maintain enthusiasm and motivation.
- Feel a sense of purpose and fulfilment from the work being done. This can be achieved by contributing to meaningful projects or roles.
- Continuously develop new skills and knowledge to stay engaged and motivated.

### **2. Extrinsic Factors**

- Work in an environment that is supportive and inclusive. This includes having accessible tools and technologies that facilitate job performance.
- Receive positive feedback and recognition for achievements. This can boost confidence and motivation.
- Opportunities for career advancement and professional growth can keep individuals motivated.

### **3. Accessibility and Accommodations**

- Utilize assistive technologies such as screen readers or other tools that enhance job performance.

- Have flexible work arrangements that accommodate visual impairments, such as remote work or flexible hours.

**4. Networking and Mentorship**

- Build a network that includes peers and mentors who understand the challenges and opportunities of working with visual impairments.
- Participate in mentorship/counselling programs that provide guidance and support tailored to visual impairments

**5. Continuous Learning**

- Engage in continuous training and development programs that enhance skills and knowledge relevant to the job.
- Stay updated with industry trends and best practices through workshops, webinars, or online courses.

**6. Celebrate Achievements**

- Share success stories and experiences with others to inspire and motivate.

**7. Addressing Barriers**

- Develop strategies to overcome common barriers, such as negative attitudes from employers or the lack of accessible resources.
- Advocate for oneself and others with visual impairments to create a more inclusive work environment.

## Chapter 3

# EMPOWERMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING

This chapter focuses on how people with visual impairments can be empowered both in terms of hard skills and soft skills. Based on research conducted by Mitra Netra, RBI, and Sao Mai, visually impaired persons can develop themselves. There are several important “bridges” to attaining their intended characteristics, such as having a network of friends, being active on social media and being involved in organizational programs that work on disability issues.

The ability to master technology will also help people with visual impairments to absorb a variety of information that can be useful to enrich their knowledge, like a frog in a well. Mastery of technology is one key to success in the future as found in Mitra Netra’s research, in which those who master technology will tend to be proactive in surfing for information through social media, especially with respect to information related to job vacancies.

The research results also mention the importance of people with disabilities knowing and understanding the regulations governing disability issues, including employment issues, and this is part of how to empower oneself both before and after entering the world of work so that people with disabilities are not “unfamiliar” with the rules.

### 3.1 Definition of Empowerment

Empowerment involves the process of cultivating the ability to develop oneself and actively participate in everyday life. This includes improving skills, increasing self-awareness, and facilitating access to the necessary resources to achieve independence.<sup>3</sup> It encompasses both internal and external factors that contribute to their self-confidence and overall well-being.

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<sup>3</sup> Minto, Hadi, Sastya Eka Pravitasari, and M. Saleh Soeaidy (2014). Pemberdayaan Bagi Penyandang Tunanetra Guna Meningkatkan Kualitas Sumber Daya Manusia (Studi Pada UPT Rehabilitasi Sosial Cacat Netra Malang), *Jurnal Administrasi Publik (JAP)*, Vol. 2, No. 1, Page. 53-59, August 10, retrieved from <https://media.neliti.com/media/publications/76850-ID-pemberdayaan-bagi-penyandang-tunanetra-g.pdf>

In terms of persons with visual impairments, empowerment also includes counselling and coaching. By focusing on individual strengths and fostering a supportive environment with a holistic approach, counselling, and coaching, persons with visual impairments are empowered take control of their lives, improve their skills, and contribute positively to their communities. The holistic approach not only benefits individuals, but also strengthens the fabric of communities by promoting collective empowerment and resilience.

### **1. Counselling**

Counselling, in terms of empowerment, focuses on helping persons with a visual impairment recognize and leverage their inherent strengths to overcome challenges and enhance their resilience. Key counselling techniques include:

- Identifying and building upon personal strengths, which fosters self-esteem and empathy.
- Working on setting realistic goals and creating actionable plans to achieve them, enhancing their sense of agency.
- Training in social skills to help individuals improve their interpersonal relationships and reduce feelings of isolation.
- Encouraging individuals to adopt a growth mindset, viewing challenges as opportunities for development rather than obstacles.

### **2. Coaching**

Coaching also plays a significant role in empowerment by promoting autonomy and self-confidence. The coaching process involves:

- Guiding individuals in exploring their beliefs and values, helping them to identify their goals and the resources available to achieve them.
- Encouraging them to take responsibility for their actions and decisions, fostering independence.
- Providing tools and techniques that enhance the coacher's abilities, enabling them to face challenges effectively.
- Identifying and challenging beliefs that may hinder their progress, facilitating a more positive outlook and proactive approach to life.

## **3.2. Capacity Building**

Empowerment and capacity building are interconnected concepts that play a crucial role in personal and community development, often facilitated through counselling and coaching. Moreover, capacity building involves enhancing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for individuals or organizations to effectively address their challenges. This can occur at various levels:

- Helping individuals identify their needs and develop the competencies required for personal growth. At this level, capacity building is included in the formal education pathways (inclusive higher education institutions) and pre-employment training for soft skills. By this level, persons with visual impairments will be finding out and inventorying job opportunities (identifying companies) as well as understanding employment regulations and disability-related regulations that are in effect.
- At the organizational level, capacity building improves any organization's effectiveness and service quality, often through partnerships that focus on empowerment principles.
- At the community level, capacity building strengthens community groups, enabling them to manage and sustain programs that address social issues effectively.

## **3.3 Forms of Empowerment for persons with a visual impairment**

The empowerment of persons with a visual impairment requires a multi-pronged approach addressing their physical, social, educational, and vocational needs. With the right support and opportunities, they can lead independent and fulfilling lives as active members of society. Several forms of empowerment can help persons with a visual impairment lead independent and fulfilling lives:

### **1. Assistive Technology and Aids**

Providing access to low-vision aids and assistive technology can greatly empower visually impaired individuals. Examples include:

- Computerized text-to-speech devices
- Customized reading magnifiers
- Handheld or mounted telescopes for viewing distant objects
- Audiobooks, large-print books, phones, clocks, etc.



## **2. Skills Training**

Providing skills training is crucial for empowering visually impaired individuals. This includes:

- Orientation and mobility training
- Adaptive living skills like cooking, cleaning, money management
- Computer and technology training
- Soft skill training
- Job skills (how to make a CV, interview technique)

## **3. Peer Support**

Connecting visually impaired individuals with peer support groups can be achieved with online or offline peer support.

## **4. Advocacy and Awareness**

Advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities and raising awareness in society is key to creating an inclusive environment. This involves:

- Educating employers about the capabilities of visually impaired workers
- Ensuring accessibility of public spaces and infrastructure
- Sensitizing teachers and students in mainstream schools
- Providing counselling and support to families

## Chapter 4

# MENTORING

Studies have shown that mentoring can lead to improved knowledge of employment services, increased job-seeking self-efficacy, and better transition outcomes to adulthood for youth with disabilities. In addition, successful mentoring programs often utilize a structured approach, pairing mentees with mentors based on specific factors, such as the level of visual impairment and career interests. This tailored approach enhances the relevance and effectiveness of the mentoring relationship.

Lastly, there is the longitudinal impact on participants in mentoring programs. They are not only achieving better employment outcomes, but also improving their psychosocial health, quality of life, and overall independence.

Ultimately, in this chapter, persons with visual impairments will gain knowledge and a good understanding of mentoring and how important this activity is in preparing them to enter the workforce.

### 4.1. Definition of Mentoring

Mentoring, in this context, is defined as a supportive relationship that facilitates the growth of individuals with visual impairments.<sup>4</sup> It typically involves matching mentees, who may be adolescents or young adults with visual impairments, with mentors who have either similar experiences or relevant expertise.

Mentoring for individuals with visual impairments plays a crucial role in preparing them for employment in the formal sector. Research indicates that mentoring interventions can significantly enhance various aspects of social participation and career readiness for this demographic. Below are the importance points of mentoring for persons with visual impairments:

1. Mentoring programs specifically designed for youth and adults with visual impairments have shown positive outcomes in employment-related

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<sup>4</sup> Minto, Hadi, Sastya Eka Pravitasari, and M. Saleh Soeaidy. PEMBERDAYAAN BAGI PENYANDANG TUNATERA GUNA MENEINGKATKAN KUALITAS SUMBER DAYA MANUSIA (STUDI PADA UPT REHABILITASI SOSIAL CACAT NETRA MALANG), *Jurnal Administrasi Publik (JAP)*, Vol. 2, No. 1, Page. 53-59, August 10, retrieved from <https://media.neliti.com/media/publications/76850-ID-pemberdayaan-bagi-penyandang-tunanetra-g.pdf>

skills. Participants in these programs often report improved self-efficacy in job-seeking, enhanced career adaptability, and greater assertiveness in job hunting.

2. A study on the effectiveness of a mentoring intervention called mentor support highlighted that adolescents with visual impairments benefit from being paired with mentors who have either similar experiences or are sighted. This program aims to improve social participation across various domains, including work and education. The structured support includes regular meetings and communication, which fosters a sense of community and belonging.
3. The presence of role models who have successfully navigated the challenges of employment can provide motivation and practical insights for individuals with visual impairments. The Mitra Netra Foundation program on mentoring shows that mentors who are their role models can share strategies for overcoming barriers related to their disability, which can be particularly valuable in enhancing the mentees' confidence and resilience.
4. Effective mentoring programs must also address accessibility issues to ensure that participants can fully engage. This includes creating physically accessible environments and providing materials in various formats to accommodate different needs.

## **4.2 Types of Mentoring**

The types of mentoring that are suitable for individuals with visual impairments typically involve several programs designed to help them develop skills, boost confidence, and facilitate their transition into the workforce. Here are some types of mentoring that can be beneficial for individuals:

1. **Community-Based Mentoring.** This program involves mentors who are also visually impaired. They provide relevant support and knowledge to younger mentees, helping them face challenges and build confidence.
2. **Education-Based Mentoring.** Education-based mentoring program pairs experienced mentors with novice teachers or orientation and mobility specialists. It helps develop professional skills and improves service quality for visually impaired children in Texas.
3. **Peer-Based Mentoring.** Peer-based mentoring offers extensive support and mentoring for individuals with visual impairments. They have

various committees and affiliations providing support and mentoring for different groups, including those with low vision, blind individuals, and others.

4. **Technology-Based Mentoring.** Modern mentoring programs often use technology to enhance accessibility and efficiency. For example, using online platforms for communication (WhatsApp) and sharing knowledge, as well as accessing relevant resources.

### **4.3 How to Find a Right Mentor**

To find a suitable mentor for an individual with visual impairment who wants to enter the workforce, follow these steps:

1. Look for mentoring programs specifically designed for individuals with visual impairments.
2. Reach out to organizations that support people with disabilities, such as the Mitra Netra Foundation, Resources for the Blind Inc. (RBI), and Sao Mai for the Blind. These organizations often have mentoring programs that can help individuals with visual impairments.
3. Use technology to find a mentor. Online platforms like LinkedIn or websites specifically for people with disabilities can help you find a suitable mentor.
4. Identify the criteria for a suitable mentor, such as:
  - A mentor with experience in helping individuals with visual impairments.
  - A mentor with technical skills to help individuals with visual impairments access information and use relevant software.
  - A mentor who can connect you with a strong and supportive community.
5. Participate in training and programs offered by supporting organizations. For instance, training provided by Mitra Netra Foundation can help individuals with visual impairments prepare for the workforce.
6. Use social networks to find a mentor. Sharing information about your needs and goals can help you find a suitable mentor.

## Chapter 5

# NETWORKING AND BEING ACTIVE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Networking and being active in social media are essential for visually impaired individuals to build connections, access resources, and enhance their career opportunities. By focusing on integrity, using assistive technologies, and developing strategies for navigating social networks, individuals with visual impairments can fully benefit from these platforms.

### 5.1. Definition of networking

Networking is the process of making connections and building relationships.<sup>5</sup> It is not limited to business people; it is about building authentic bonds with others. The concept of networking emphasizes the importance of integrity. This means focusing on helping others and building genuine relationships, which can lead to mutual support and opportunities.

### 5.2. The strategy to get an effective network for persons with visual impairments

To get an effective network for individuals with visual impairments, consider the following strategies:

1. Social networking involves accessing online services and interacting within virtual communities for communication and information sharing. It is not limited to business people; it can be about building authentic bonds with others.
2. Utilize screen readers like JAWS, NVDA, or Voiceover to navigate social media platforms. These tools can read out text and provide auditory feedback, making it easier to interact with online content.
3. Use desktop computers with assistive technologies to access popular social networks like Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. The first article in the series by the American Foundation for the Blind provides strategies

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<sup>5</sup> Outini, I. (2020). The Impact of Social Media on the Social Lives of People with Visual Impairment (Facebook Groups as a Case Study). Graduate Theses and Dissertations Retrieved from <https://scholarworks.uark.edu/etd/3552>

for navigating these networks on desktop platforms. In addition, for mobile access, use smartphones with screen readers and other assistive apps. These apps can help you navigate social media interfaces more easily.

4. Emphasize building personal bonds by talking about families and interests. This approach helps in establishing strong relationships. Moreover, seek ways to help others, such as with introductions, advice, or insights. This not only builds trust, but also creates a sense of mutual support, which is crucial in networking.
5. Connect with communities and groups that support visually impaired individuals. These organizations often provide resources and networking opportunities specifically designed for people with visual impairments.
7. Be aware that social network developers frequently update their interfaces and functionalities. This dynamic nature can sometimes make it challenging for visually impaired users to access the sites. Stay informed about these changes to adapt your strategies accordingly.

### **5.3 Being active on social media**

Currently, being active on social media will be advantageous for persons with visual impairments. Social networks can be intimidating for this segment of society; however, they offer numerous benefits once obstacles to accessibility are addressed. Platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter can be accessed using assistive technologies like screen readers.

Persons with visual impairments should be active on social media for several reasons:

1. Social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter provide opportunities for visually impaired individuals to connect with others who share similar experiences, fostering a sense of community and social support. This can be particularly beneficial in providing emotional support and reducing feelings of isolation.
2. Social media platforms offer a wealth of information that can be accessed through assistive technologies such as screen readers. This allows visually impaired individuals to stay updated on various topics, including news, education, and social events.



3. Social media enables visually impaired individuals to perform tasks independently, such as shopping, accessing educational resources, and navigating the physical world through online maps and directions.
4. The Uses and Gratifications Theory suggests that people actively seek out specific media content for particular purposes and goals. For visually impaired individuals, social media can provide gratifications such as social interaction, emotional support, and access to information, which enhance their ability to act on information.
5. Many social media platforms, including Facebook and Twitter, have built-in accessibility features, such as automatic alternative text for images, screen-reader support, and text-based captions. These features significantly improve the usability of social media for visually impaired users.
6. Social media can facilitate the acquisition of social cues and educational content, which is crucial for visually impaired individuals. Platforms like Facebook have groups dedicated to low-vision support, where users can share experiences and learn from each other.

#### **5.4. A peer group of persons with visually impaired to exchange information**

The importance of peer groups for persons with visual impairments in terms of workforce participation can be highlighted in several key areas:

1. Peer groups provide emotional support and motivation, which are crucial for individuals with visual impairments. Sharing experiences and work successes can help build confidence and encourage participation in the workforce.
2. Peer groups often share information about job opportunities, assistive technologies, and workplace accommodations. This collective knowledge can help individuals navigate the job market more effectively.
3. Peer groups facilitate networking and professional development. They can provide insights into career advancement strategies, mentorship, and the importance of socializing with sighted peers to enhance job retention and perception as effective employees.
4. Peer groups help identify and address the barriers faced by visually impaired individuals in the workforce, such as limited access to

information and negative attitudes from colleagues or employers. They also highlight facilitators like technical aids and supportive employers.

5. Peer groups contribute to community building and inclusion. They create spaces where visually impaired individuals can share their experiences, collaborate on projects, and advocate for better workplace inclusion practices. This collective effort can lead to more inclusive work environments.
6. Peer groups often discuss and share strategies for using assistive technologies, which are essential for accessing information and performing job tasks. This collective knowledge helps in adapting workplaces to meet the needs of visually impaired employees.

## Chapter 6

# A FAMILY AS SUPPORT SYSTEM

Parents can be a significant motivator for individuals with visual impairments, especially if they are very supportive of their child's progress. On the other hand, some parents may be too protective of such children, thereby hindering their development and causing them to be filled with fear and experience other psychological impacts. It often requires courage or a breakthrough of some sort for individuals with visual impairments who have experienced excessive parental protection. In some cases, they may take bold steps to leave their parents' comfort zone and strive to develop themselves.

### 6.1 Definition of support systems

A support system for someone with a visual impairment is a network of resources, services, and individuals that assist in enhancing the individual's independence, mobility, and overall quality of life.

### 6.2 Types of Support Systems

A support system for persons with visual impairments can be categorized into several types, each providing a unique set of benefits and functionalities. Here are the key types of support systems:

#### 1. Family Systems-Based Approach

The family systems-based approach emphasizes the importance of the entire family unit in adjusting to the vision loss of a family member. This approach recognizes that the person with the disability and their family members are part of a complex, integrated system with preexisting patterns of relationships, norms, rules, roles, and communication styles. Successful adjustment involves modifying these patterns to accommodate the changes due to the loss of vision.

#### 2. Emotional and Practical Support

Providing empathy and understanding is essential. This includes counselling services to enhance coping skills and increase communication within the family. Practical Support: Assistance with daily activities is vital and encompasses a range of tasks, such as transportation, household

chores, and navigating the environment. This can include training in the use of assistive technologies like smart canes and braille signs.

### **3. Assistive Technologies**

Utilizing smartphones with assistive apps that provide audio feedback, navigation assistance, and object detection can significantly enhance independence. Smart Cane: Equipped with sensors that detect obstacles and provide feedback, smart canes are a practical tool for navigation. Braille Signs and Tools: Braille signs and tools like braille displays on smartphones help in reading and writing.

### **4. Community and Social Support**

Access to community resources such as vision rehabilitation centres, mental health services, support groups, and web-based information is crucial for families of persons with visual impairments. Parent Mentors: Trained parent mentors can provide support and guidance to families navigating similar circumstances, helping them understand the resources available and how to make informed decisions.

### **6. Education and Training**

Providing tools and resources for parents, grandparents, and siblings is essential. This includes in-home setups, necessary education tools, and training in assistive technologies. Counselling: counselling services managed by professionals like marriage and family therapists can help families cope with the emotional challenges associated with visual impairment. By integrating these components, a comprehensive family support system can significantly enhance the quality of life for individuals with visual impairments and their families.

## **6.3 The Role of Family**

The role of family for persons with visual impairments is multifaceted and crucial for their rehabilitation, independence, and overall well-being. Here are the key aspects of the family's role:

### **1. Emotional Support**

- Family members often live with or have lived with the person with visual impairment, providing firsthand knowledge of their medical history and coping mechanisms. This intimacy helps in

understanding the individual's emotional needs and reactions to vision loss.

- Family members observe how the person with visual impairment reacts to and copes with vision loss and other stressors in life. This observation helps in providing emotional support tailored to the individual's specific needs.

## **2. Practical Support**

- Family members often assist with daily tasks such as household chores, transportation, and navigation. This practical support is essential for maintaining independence and quality of life.
- Family members often accompany the relative with low vision to eye examinations and rehabilitation services, serving as communicators and liaisons with healthcare providers.

## **3. Educational and Vocational Support**

- Parents play a significant role in the development of visually impaired children, influencing their educational and vocational paths. Parents' attitudes towards education can significantly impact the child's social and emotional behaviour.
- Family support is critical in vocational rehabilitation processes, helping individuals with visual impairments become competitive and valuable employees. This includes providing resources and training necessary for employment.

## **4. Social Integration**

- The family environment shapes the social integration of visually impaired children more than a formal school. A supportive family environment can enhance the child's ability to cope with the sighted world.

## Chapter 7

# CHALLENGES AND PROBLEM SOLVING

Even now, there remains a stigma among most people, including employers, that people with disabilities are unable to work. Companies/institutions hold the prejudice that people with visual impairments cannot work because they cannot see. In addition, companies do not understand disabilities. When advertising job vacancies for people with disabilities, they often fail to provide accessibility or reasonable accommodation during the recruitment process. As a result, candidates with visual impairments are excluded because accommodation is not provided.

The general workforce recruitment process, where people with visual impairments can apply, often presents obstacles at the interview stage even though all administrative requirements (such as documents) have been completed. There are several cases where the computers used for written exams are not accessible to people with visual impairments (no screen reader program available). Many of the people with visual impairments who are recruited and start working in government institutions do not have a clear job description, so their role as new employees is not optimal.

Some parents may be overprotective of their visually impaired children, which hinders their development and fills them with fear, alongside other psychological issues. Extra courage or breakthroughs are needed for individuals with visual impairments whose parents have been overprotective.

### 7.1 General challenges faced by persons with visually impaired

Persons with visual impairments face a variety of challenges that can be categorized into several key areas:

#### 1. Educational Challenges

- Many educational materials, including textbooks and online resources, are not accessible to visually impaired individuals, making it difficult for them to acquire knowledge.



- The educational curriculum often relies heavily on visual aids, which can make it challenging for visually impaired students to understand and participate fully in class.
- While assistive technologies like Braille and screen readers are available, they may not always be sufficient or accessible, particularly in subjects that require complex data analysis or visualization.

## **2. Practical and Daily Living Challenges**

- Navigating through public spaces, reading signs, and recognizing objects can be difficult without sight, leading to feelings of isolation and reduced independence.
- Access to leisure activities such as reading books, watching movies, or participating in sports can be limited due to the lack of accessible formats and equipment.
- Finding and keeping a job can be challenging due to the lack of accessible workplaces and the need for frequent accommodations.
- Orientation and mobility are weaknesses that persons with visual impairments face and they need to find ways to overcome them.

## **3. Social and Emotional Challenges**

- Visually impaired individuals often face societal stigma, which can lead to feelings of isolation and reduced emotional support.
- Public spaces, transportation systems, and many everyday objects are not designed with accessibility in mind, making it difficult for visually impaired individuals to fully participate in society.
- The lack of emotional support at diagnosis centres and limited accessibility to activities can exacerbate feelings of isolation and depression.

## **4. Technological Challenges**

- While assistive technologies like smart canes and RFID-based map-reading systems are available, they may not always be reliable or user-friendly, particularly in complex environments.
- Screen reader software can be limited in its ability to handle complex data analysis or visualization tasks, requiring additional assistance from sighted individuals.

**5. Overprotective family members**

- Many persons with visual impairment get restrictions from family or close people and how to overcome them.

**6. Employers' mindset**

- Limited knowledge and understanding of employers about visually impaired persons and their capabilities
- The lack of access and reasonable accommodation during recruitment and when visually impaired individuals are already employed (including accompaniment).

## **7.2 Problem solving**

Resolving the challenges faced by individuals with visual impairments involves a multifaceted approach that includes technological advancements, adaptive strategies, and inclusive environments. Here are some key strategies to address these challenges:

**1. Accessible Technology**

- Utilize screen readers like JAWS or NVDA, and braille displays to access digital information. Tools like Beeline Reader can also help with reading text from signs and documents.
- Leverage voice assistants like Siri, Google Assistant, or Alexa to perform tasks such as setting reminders, sending messages, and controlling smart home devices.

**2. Orientation and Mobility**

- Use a white cane or guide dog to navigate physical spaces. Training in orientation and mobility techniques is essential for independence.
- Learn to use public transportation systems or utilize ride-sharing apps with accessible features. Many cities have accessible public transportation options, including audio announcements and tactile signage.

**3. Household Tasks and Organization**

- Label items in braille or use tactile markers to identify and distinguish between different objects. This helps in maintaining a well-organized living space.

- Learn adaptive cooking techniques, such as using tactile markers on appliances and following recipes through audio descriptions. Tools like talking thermometers and talking clocks can simplify daily tasks.

#### **4. Employment and Education**

- Use braille textbooks or digital resources that are accessible through screen readers. Employers should provide workplace accommodations such as screen magnifiers, screen readers, and accessible formats of documents.
- Access vocational rehabilitation training programs to prepare for employment opportunities. These programs help individuals with visual impairments develop the skills needed to succeed in various fields.

#### **5. Social Inclusion**

- Educate others about blindness and promote inclusivity in social activities. Encourage open communication and provide accessibility information about events or venues. Foster inclusive attitudes to make visually impaired individuals feel welcome in social gatherings, sports, cultural events, and hobbies.
- Avoid using non-inclusive language that perpetuates stereotypes. Use inclusive communication tools and methods in meetings and casual conversations to accommodate those who are visually impaired.

#### **6. Support Systems**

- Have supportive family and friends who understand the challenges of living with visual impairments. Their emotional support can significantly boost confidence and independence.
- Encourage organizations to create diversity and inclusion training programs. These programs should allow visually impaired employees to speak up and provide feedback, addressing biases and prejudices.

#### **7. Community Resources**

- Utilize resources from organizations like the Mitra Netra Foundation, Resources for the Blind Inc., and Sao Mai for the Blind. These organizations provide various forms of support, including accessible materials, training programs, and emotional support.

## Chapter 8

# THE SUCCESS STORY OF PERSONS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS IN EMPLOYMENT

### 8.1 Aldrin: *“What motivates me to keep going despite challenges is the confidence that I can continue to be productive and make a difference.”*

My name is Aldrin Reyes, a 31 years old visually impaired person with retinitis pigmentosa, a condition that affects my vision. However, because the progression is gradual, it hasn't significantly impacted my daily life. I've had time to adapt to the changes, and I've learned to navigate challenges effectively with the help of technology and a positive mindset.



*Aldrin Reyes*

I am a person who is always looking for ways to make things easier, not just for myself but for those around me. As someone who is visually impaired, I've become a technology enthusiast, always eager to explore and adopt new tools and technologies that enhance my productivity and independence. My approach to challenges is to find creative solutions and stay optimistic, turning obstacles into opportunities for growth.

What motivates me to keep going despite challenges is the confidence that I can continue to be productive and make a difference. I firmly believe in the power of technology to overcome obstacles, and I'm fortunate to have a strong support system of people who encourage and inspire me.

I previously worked at Resources for the Blind as a computer trainer for co-visually impaired individuals, where I gained valuable experience in technology and accessibility. I landed this job through effective networking, with a significant boost from Resources for the Blind. They recognized my potential and referred me to the company, which opened the door to my initial career opportunity. This connection was instrumental in helping me step into the professional world.

I didn't face significant challenges at work because my employer was aware of my visual impairment and proactive in addressing my accommodation needs, providing a screen reader, orientation and mobility support, and other assistance. They also regularly checked in to ensure I had everything I needed.

Currently, I work as an Associate Clinical System Specialist at PPD, part of Thermos Fisher. We are a clinical research organization, and my role involves supporting pharmaceutical and biotechnology firms by managing user access in clinical systems and handling process-related issues.

I'm so happy working at my current workplace. My company provides a range of accommodations and support to meet my needs. This includes reasonable accommodations like workspace adjustments, such as installing screen readers and providing accessible materials in advance.

My company invests in my growth by providing training on application software and facilitating mentoring and peer support programs. Support from my colleagues and supervisors has greatly impacted my performance by creating an inclusive and collaborative work environment. Their willingness to assist with accommodations and provide continuous encouragement has enabled me to focus on my strengths and contribute effectively to the team, ultimately boosting my productivity and confidence.

Family and friends have played a crucial role in my career journey by providing emotional support, encouragement, and practical advice. Their belief in my abilities has been a source of motivation, and their understanding and flexibility have helped me navigate challenges more effectively. Their support has been instrumental in helping me stay focused and confident as I pursue my career goals.

My biggest support also comes from my company which has been a key organization that helped me achieve my professional goals. They provided essential support, resources, and opportunities that have enabled me to grow and succeed in my career.

My biggest career achievement so far is completing my training and consistently performing my duties effectively. I take pride in my ability to meet job requirements and contribute to the success of my team. I have received appreciation and positive feedback for my hard work, which has been meaningful and motivating for me. This achievement has positively influenced my self-perception by reinforcing my confidence in my abilities and validating my efforts. It has shown me that my hard work and dedication are recognized and valued, which motivates me to continue striving for excellence.

Therefore, I would encourage others in a similar situation to maintain a clear vision and have the courage to act on their beliefs. Collaboration with others is also key – working together can provide valuable support and open opportunities for growth and success.

For me, success means achieving personal and professional goals while continuously growing and overcoming challenges. I've achieved success by staying focused on my objectives, leveraging my strengths and resources, and seeking support when needed. Through dedication, perseverance, and collaboration, I've been able to make meaningful progress and reach my milestones.

My hopes for the future include continuing to grow both personally and professionally. Personally, I aim to maintain a positive outlook and keep developing skills that enhance my quality of life. Professionally, I aspire to take on new challenges, contribute to meaningful projects, and advance in my career while fostering a supportive and inclusive work environment. Ultimately, I hope to make a positive impact and inspire others along the way.

## **8.2 Fridayani: "The key to success is how we can realize ourselves as whole human beings."**

I am Fridayani, a person with retinitis pigmentosa. Currently, I have two jobs: as a law lecturer at Pamulang University and a corporate manager at a prominent company in South Tangerang, PT Pigeon. I am 45 years old and the eldest child in my family. Why do I have two jobs? It is a long story and challenging journey.

Even though I am visually impaired, I don't like to be pampered. I decided to leave home to work because my parents didn't allow me to work due to my disability. They are so protective of me. Before leaving home, I equipped myself with skills such as screen reader software, orientation and mobility,



Talkback, My Eyes, and English proficiency. Honestly, the education that supports my daily life is not just about being bold; it's about being prepared.

Initially, I applied for jobs at several companies but was never successful because of my visual impairment. I sent



*Firdayani (with sunglasses) among her students*

applications daily through JobStreet, so much so that JobStreet reprimanded me for exceeding 100 applications per month. Sometimes I felt tired, but I kept going. After several rejections following interviews, I often heard hurtful comments that belittled me.

I have the ability to think, and with the advancement of technology, I can enhance my capacity. I never lost heart, even though my family still doubted my abilities. I wanted to show that visually impaired people can analyse by using their thinking skills, besides having massage skills that are often developed at several institutions.

Regarding education and training, I have tried to seek out and participate in as many courses as possible that I believe could equip me. For example, I studied Braille at the Mitra Netra Foundation online with professional mentors. I also took programming and English courses through Mitra Netra Foundation. For orientation and mobility, I received training at the LDD of the Cathedral Church.

I have pursued my education up to a Ph.D. level. Many universities offered me scholarships. My hobby of searching for reading materials on the internet and reading has greatly empowered me.

I got my first job when a friend offered me a position. I didn't think long about it; I applied and was accepted. My job as a corporate planner involves creating budgets and financial plans for the year, which are then consolidated with the Group Head Office (GHO). As a lecturer, I teach, serve the community, conduct research, and write journals that must be published. In the workplace, the first challenge I faced was adapting to the physical environment, such as rooms and

stairs. The solution to this challenge is to actively socialize with colleagues. Sometimes, there are people who bully, thinking it's a joke. I usually stay silent and instead demonstrate my capability as a worker who is not affected by insults. As a person with a disability, we must not be easily discouraged when facing insults.

As a manager, I have two staff members in corporate planning and compliance. I must communicate with the SBU regarding the factory budget and discuss solutions to problems during meetings with other managers. I conduct monthly compliance workshops from the GHO so that all employees know the established guidelines. As a lecturer, I need to prepare teaching materials, and I strive to make the content understandable and create an enjoyable classroom atmosphere.

My superiors and colleagues at my company treat me just like anyone else (non-disabled). I am always included in various activities, and they often help, even without me asking. If I need something, I just ask, and they are always willing to help. My company has rules or codes of conduct to prevent discrimination against anyone at work.

Finally, my message to fellow visually impaired individuals is to strengthen your mentality, communicate more, don't stay idle, always stay motivated, recognize your potential, always strive to enhance your abilities, and don't rely on your surroundings. For me, the key to success is how we can realize ourselves as whole human beings, be recognized for our existence, and pave the way for others.

**8.3 Rafik Akbar: "It's a good idea to first get to know your own potential and be able to analyse your strengths and weaknesses."**

I am Rafik Akbar, a 35-year-old man and the eldest of three siblings. I was born into a family with no history of visual impairment. I became blind at the age of 12. After losing my sight, my social interactions,



*Rafik Akbar is teaching his students in the class*

learning style, and ways of maintaining comfort in life changed through adaptation. I searched for other ways to make myself comfortable in my daily life, one of which was spending time enjoying radio programs.

I attended a regular school and participated in a mentoring program from the Mitra Netra Foundation. I gained various skills through institutions that provide learning and skill development services for the visually impaired, such as the IB Foundation, Mitra Netra Foundation, the Indonesian Muslim Blind Association, Raudlatul Makfufin Foundation, and the Kartunet.com community.

During my schooling, I experienced various forms of bullying, both verbal and non-verbal. However, I was always helped by those who were willing to befriend me.

Regarding work experience, my first job was as an article editor for the Kartunet.com community. I got the job due to friendships with fellow visually impaired people who founded the technology-based community. I then worked as a secretary at the Raudlatul Makfufin Foundation because I was one of the selected individuals considered active and able to contribute more to the organization. Currently, I work as a teacher in a regular public elementary school, not specifically for disabilities, through the civil servant selection test was for disability positions.

The biggest challenge in my current work is trying to blend in with colleagues. I approached senior colleagues first, considering that they would be much more mature and capable of appreciating my presence by often greeting me first.

Regarding support, I tend to be self-reliant in managing everything. Occasionally, I try to communicate my difficulties to colleagues. My family, especially my parents, always supported me, particularly when I was looking for a job. Other support came from visually impaired friends who provided a lot of information about job openings as civil servants.

The message I would like to convey to fellow visually impaired people is that you must quickly make peace with yourself and always believe that every difficulty given by God will also be accompanied by ease from God. For me, success is the happiness that grows within oneself. Being able to make others happy can also make us happy. Helping others can also make us happy. So, when we feel happy every second of our lives, success is already in our grasp.

In the future, I want to establish an institution that provides inclusive education services, meaning treating everyone equally and adjusting to their challenges. In my career, I want to hold a position where I can make policies that have a significant positive impact on many people, especially in the field of education so that no one feels discriminated against in improving their quality of education.

To fellow visually impaired people, it's a good idea to first get to know your potential and be able to analyse your strengths and weaknesses. This is very useful, especially in facing challenges in the workplace. Additionally, join various communities, whether for people with disabilities or non-disability communities, that aim to improve self-quality.

#### 8.4 **Rachel: "We Can also be a productive member of in the society."**

When I was born, my parents gave me a beautiful name, Rachel May Villafania Kirimit. I'm a 27-year-old visually impaired person, and am turning 28 in September. I was born on September 7th, 1996. Now I live at Buen Lag Mangaldan, Pangasinan, Philippines.



*Rachel May Villafania Kirimit*

Currently I'm working as a staff member for an Information Technology/BPO Company. I have been working there for almost three years. This company is the first company I have worked with. Previously, I have only worked part-time or voluntarily in a non-governmental organization.

As a visually impaired person, it has been such a journey for me to have this job. I finished my bachelor's degree in elementary education, majoring in special education, and overcame many struggles and challenges at university.

Here are a few challenges I had to face during my time at the university. Not all the professors are adaptable enough to the changes or challenges I experienced. Some professors were able to provide soft copies of the materials, but some only provided printed copies because the handouts or materials they used came from books or photocopies of books. So, it was very difficult for me, most especially if the handouts were too long.



Whenever I needed to read that material, I had to ask someone to read it for me. I didn't think that anyone would because they would have to have the patience to read aloud that long. That meant it was a very challenging for me. What I usually did was rely on the lectures that were given. I made notes; I took down important details on the topics.

At home, my parents, brothers, and sisters accepted me as who I am, and they are supportive. Although at first, they thought I would not be able to study because of my condition. However, our neighbor informed me that there was a teacher who trained Braille for persons with visual impairment; so when I was seven, I studied Braille. Then after a year, I was supposed to enter a school for the blind, but my braille teacher suggested that I go to regular school.

My mom and dad went to the higher authorities, to the educational superintendent and educational supervisor. They brought my case, and the division superintendent sent the letter to them, told that the school should accept me, because I have the right to education as well.

My parents were the biggest supporter of my having the right to education. Especially, my late father who never tired of supporting and motivating me to his last breath. He always wanted me to have a success in the future as a person with a visual impairment.

As a thankful visually impaired daughter, I learned so much in school. I started learning computer in fifth grade, but I was not able to use it because there were no screen readers in the school. But I was finally able to use and master computers during my college years, thanks to RBI (Resources for the Blind, Inc.), which allowed me to borrow a netbook that I used during my studies.

In my college years I did not only learn on campus, I took a few trainings to prepare me for my future in the workplace. In 2014 I took a computer training course delivered by RBI. They introduced us to basic computer navigation, creating folders, searching on the internet, and Microsoft software like, Word, PowerPoint, and Excel. They also introduced us to email: creating emails, email accounts, and sending emails.

In 2016, I also attended digit, PC operations with Access Technology. It was a twenty-eight-day training all about computers providing more in-depth knowledge on computers, with a few of the same lessons on basic computer navigation, Word, Excel, PowerPoint, emails, Facebook, searching the Internet, and basic troubleshooting. And I also took Android accessibility training. It

was more about training on mobile devices, especially about navigating mobile devices.

For soft skills trainings, I attended a few in our PC operations division relating to technology, platform life skills training, self-awareness, and soft skills for preemployment in a Preemployment Summit held by RBI. I knew RBI from my Braille teacher, who trained there and was the one who introduced me to RBI. She was also the one that encouraged me to participate in computer trainings.

One of the invitations was an event called Preemployment Summit in 2021. A member of the RBI staff asked me to send my resume to him, so I did and he submitted my resume to different companies. After few months, someone from the agency called saying a company was hiring, and she said that they were interested after seeing my resume from the RBI staff. She asked whether I was interested, and I said yes of course, I was interested for that job. She then sent the job description and the consent form since I was interested.

I signed the consent form and sent it back to them by email, after which she called again to inform me that I needed to have an online interview with the hiring manager. In the interview, I was asked about my background, my knowledge of computers and how I acquired my computer skills. A day after the interview, the agency called me again.

She said that I passed the interview and asked me for some requirements like the SSS, field health, important documents such as, ID, birth certificate, SO clearance, important clearance, etc. It was all during pandemic, so there were lots of lockdowns happening here. I also needed to get a medical examination stating that I was capable of working.

Unfortunately, the accredited clinic of the company is in other towns that was a bit far from our town. I asked if I could have the examination at the nearest medical clinic because of the pandemic. Luckily, the company allowed it, they granted my request. So, I took the medical examination and obtained other necessary clearance. The agency also helped me for the other documents they required.

As for my company, they provided accommodations and assisted me remotely to set up my computer. They just called me via phone and gave instructions on how to turn on the computer and what to enter in order to turn it on. And then, they controlled my computer remotely to set up the necessary software.

They also set up a two-day orientation for me about company policies, the nondisclosure and compliance agreement, as well as the trainings I was required to complete. They also explained their policy on inclusion and diversity, the hierarchy, organizational chart, and some software they used in the workplace. In the future I hope I'll have the opportunity to be a supervisor or manager.

I don't know whether an employee with a visual impairment like me could have a career, but I hope so. I'm not the first person with disabilities in my company as there are other employees with hearing impairments and those with speech impairments.

Since there is a stigma, persons with disabilities also have difficulty getting formal training, formal education, just like what I explained about being rejected. I was refused. Not all persons with disabilities have the courage to fight for their right to education. And not all of them have parents like mine; many of them just are just resigned to their child's situation. There are even some parents who do not allow their children to go to school because they are afraid that their children might be bullied.

Right now, I am living happily with my mother. I am still single so she was so happy because we will no longer depend on my older siblings, on my brothers and sisters who have their own families. Now I am the one providing for our basic necessities and basic needs. I am just like what we in the Philippines call the breadwinner of the family.

Besides my mother, my brothers, and sisters can also ask me for help when they need me too. This is in terms of knowledge in technology, since I have attended trainings and know a few things. They also sometimes ask me for financial help.

My humble advice is that persons with disabilities can also be a productive member of society. So, they can still work. They can still acquire education. They can still acquire trainings. With the proper support, they can reach out to RBI or ATRIEV for support. Fight for your right to education because there are laws protecting persons with disabilities.

**8.5 Nguyen Thi Yen Anh: "To help you succeed, consistently networking and pursuing ongoing learning are crucial."**

My name is Nguyen Thi Yen Anh, I'm 32 years old. I work as an Inclusive Education Officer at UNICEF Viet Nam. I would describe myself as a



passionate and determined advocate for breaking barriers and advancing inclusivity.

I completed a Bachelor's degree in Oriental Studies and pursued a Master's in Educational Leadership and Management at La Trobe University in Australia to further my expertise. In my current role as an Inclusive Education Officer, I am dedicated to leveraging digital solutions to enhance accessibility and inclusivity in education.

I began acquiring essential skills from a young age, starting with rehabilitation skills and daily living tasks at a blind school when I was five. During my years there, I learned to be independent and developed crucial skills for the blind, including mobility, daily living tasks, self-awareness, cooking, and self-care.

Additionally, I attended ICT training for the visually impaired, both nationally and internationally, which greatly enhanced my ICT skills and supported my studies and work. I also participated in personnel management training organized by the Vietnam Blind Association, as well as various seminars, workshops, and training sessions related to inclusive education and disability inclusion.

I benefited from several specialized education programs and training. The ICT training for the visually impaired was precious, as it improved my technological proficiency. Furthermore, the personnel management training and thematic seminars provided me with additional insights and skills relevant to inclusive education and disability inclusion.

My concern about disability inclusion was based on my challenging and inaccessible educational experience. I consistently could not access textbooks and other school materials in accessible formats – neither with Braille nor on a laptop. This left me in the situation of burdening peers and teachers to read books for me, which were then manually transcribed into braille.



*Nguyen Thi Yen Anh at the front of UNICEF Vietnam Office*

I also struggled due to the perception and assumption about the abilities of the visually impaired. For example, when I applied to university to study languages, I was rejected, being told the school did not have resources to support me. This is despite never once discussing with me what support did I need. As can be seen, this was an impactful factor in my life, as I had to change my entire vision of my future. These factors shaped my future.

I am currently working as an Inclusive Education Officer at UNICEF Viet Nam. Before this, I worked at the Provincial Blind Association, where I was the head of the Education and Communication Division.

As a blind person in the workplace, I also faced a lot of challenges. Inaccessible documents have been a significant issue to overcome. Many documents are made in PDF formats which can often be inaccessible. Due to this, I have often had to tap into software that is sometimes ineffective, or ask to switch tasks with colleagues.

Another challenge has been communicating effectively with implementing partners and governmental counterparts due to their low awareness of disability. When communicating with some partners, they do not see me as being capable. Thus, they may not trust or listen to my ideas.

Now, as an Inclusive Education Officer at UNICEF Viet Nam, my main role and responsibilities involve a range of activities focused on promoting and implementing inclusive education and broader inclusion initiatives.

UNICEF is a champion in providing support for staff with disabilities. It has a clear policy and strategy on disability inclusion, along with a Reasonable Accommodation Committee that offers appropriate assistance. I have received the support I requested to enhance my work and overcome the inaccessibility and barriers I face due to my disability.

Support from colleagues and supervisors has had a profound impact on my performance. The guidance, patience, and encouragement I've received have empowered me to take on challenges with greater confidence. My supervisor, in particular, has provided me with the autonomy to explore solutions and contribute creatively, which has not only enhanced my skills but also deepened my commitment to our shared goals.

Acknowledging the challenges I face at work due to my vision impairment, I have requested and received special assistance that has been invaluable. In addition to seeking guidance and support from my supervisor and colleagues, I requested a personal assistant who helps with tasks like converting documents

and materials into accessible formats and accompanies me to external events, ensuring I can navigate them more effectively. This assistance has significantly enhanced my ability to perform my job effectively and stay engaged in all aspects of my work.

My biggest career achievement so far has been playing an active and pivotal role in the success of projects and initiatives related to promoting inclusive education and digital inclusion for marginalized children during my time at UNICEF. I have also made significant contributions to raising awareness about disability inclusion and accessibility within the organization and among implementing partners.

As a blind individual working at an international UN organization like UNICEF, I have inspired many individuals with disabilities, demonstrating that they too can make a meaningful impact in their communities and beyond.

I have a message for the visually impaired who have a similar situation to me. Trust yourself! If others can do it, so can you. I live by this belief, adapting and persevering to achieve my goals. I always remind myself, "If they can, why can't I?" Let this mindset drive you forward and bring you to success.

To me, success means making a meaningful impact and contributing positively to my field while overcoming personal and professional challenges, becoming stronger day by day, and recognizing that I am a valuable person.

In the future, I hope to become more confident, skilled, and resilient. Professionally, I aim to advance to a higher position in my career and use that opportunity to raise awareness and reshape perceptions of the capabilities of persons with disabilities, advocating for equity and greater inclusivity.

My family has been a strong source of support and encouragement throughout my journey, standing by me in tough times and celebrating my successes. Friends have also played a crucial role, offering valuable resources, advice, and support. Their contributions have been essential in helping me navigate challenges and stay motivated, significantly impacting my professional growth and success.

To all disabled people, I advise you not to be afraid to express what you need. It can be overwhelming to be the only person with a disability in an office and feel that no one will care about your challenges. However, if you do not share your needs, others will not even know. If you face rejection, do not be afraid to advocate for yourself. All of us need to be confident and resilient in the fight

for inclusion. Additionally, it is vital to ensure you have the social and practical skills to integrate into a mainstream environment.

To help you succeed, consistently networking and pursuing ongoing learning is crucial. For me, prioritizing education has been instrumental, as it is the greatest asset I bring to any organization. My diverse knowledge, acquired from various educational settings, has been invaluable. Attending relevant events has also enabled me to build meaningful connections with decision-makers.

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