Help us harness the power of technology to transform the lives of 63 million blind persons in India

How do persons who are blind read their newspapers in the morning? Have you ever thought about how they carry out routine tasks like studying for exams, corresponding with others or browsing and buying on the Internet? In short, how do they lead a normal life?

There are over 63 million blind persons in India.
One in every four blind persons in the world is an Indian.
Most blind persons are below the poverty line and cannot afford proprietary commercial accessibility solutions.

At CIS, we are working on a solution to make computers freely accessible to blind persons all over India and we need your help. We are engaged in a project supported by The Hans Foundation to:

- Develop an enhanced version of an open source screen reader – NVDA (Non Visual Desktop Access) that can be used with Indian languages We also aim to enhance NVDA to provide better support for MS Office, to help blind persons in the workplace
- Develop Text To Speech engines in 15 Indian languages using the open source Text to speech synthesizer e-speak.

Problems:

We began this project in August 2012, since when there has been one project manager working on it along with one team member. Some of the key problems we are facing include:

- Failure to find good developers willing to work on this project
- The complexity of the NVDA software causes long ramp-up and fix times – it takes several months to understand the application and start coding

A combination of the above two issues has resulted in us being able to fix only 2 bugs till May 2013, which is far below our initial target of fixing 75 bugs over a period of 2.5 years. We urgently need to scale up to have any meaningful impact.

How you can help

We are looking for enthusiastic, self-motivated and committed people with experience in object oriented design and C++/Python to join our team. We are happy to explore flexible working arrangements – both in terms of time commitments and place of work. Given the social relevance and impact of this work, we would also welcome participation from developer communities so that we can build a worldwide network of developers working on these issues. If you or anyone you know would be interested in working with us, please reach out to us and please do forward this appeal to all those you know.
Contact: Nirmita Narasimhan, CIS (nirmita@cis-india.org, Ph: +91-80-4092683)