



Did you know?

Nearly [one in three people with vision impairment worldwide lives in the WHO South-East Asia Region](#).

As cities across the WHO South-East Asia Region advance commitments to equity and well-being, **accessible information** is emerging as a cornerstone of inclusive urban environments. For persons with visual impairment, Braille remains a vital pathway to literacy, independence, and participation in city life. In light of [World Braille Day](#), this newsletter highlights how **Bangladesh and India** are expanding access to Braille through **innovative, scalable, and people-centred solutions**—both digital and physical.

Case Study: Bangladesh

Advancing Braille Literacy Through Inclusive Digital Design

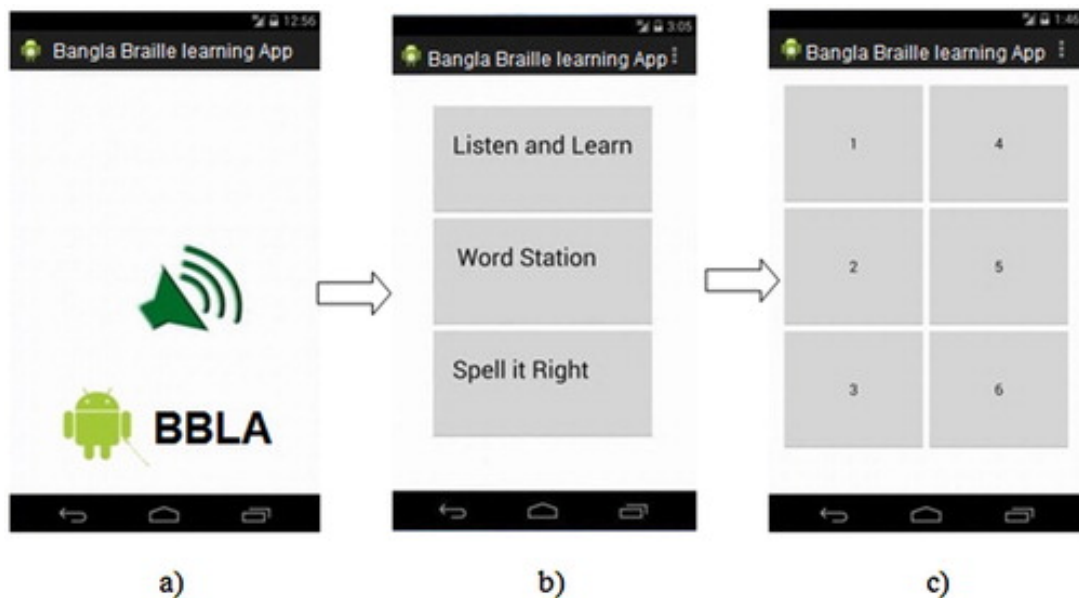
In Bangladesh, the locally developed [Bangla Braille learning application](#) demonstrates how digital innovation can strengthen Braille literacy in urban and peri-urban contexts. Designed for smartphones, the software is now widely used across cities to support visually impaired learners through tactile interaction, vibration, and audio feedback, enabling independent and intuitive learning experiences.

What distinguishes these initiatives is their user-informed design approach. Developers engaged directly with visually impaired students, teachers, and experts to shape interfaces that are easy to navigate and responsive to real-world needs. By offering Braille learning in the Bangla language, the applications reinforce the importance of linguistic accessibility, ensuring that inclusive design reflects local contexts.



A student testing the BBLA interface. Source: Nahar, L., Sulaiman, R., & Jaafar, A.

This software demonstrates how digital innovation can advance accessibility through participatory design. Braille literacy acquired through accessible technologies supports individuals not only in education, but also in navigating public services, transport systems, and community spaces—strengthening autonomy and confidence in everyday urban life.



(a) Opening screen of BBLA; (b) Main menu; and (c) Braille dot input screen. Source: Nahar, L., Sulaiman, R., & Jaafar, A.

Case Study: India

Building an Accessible Knowledge Ecosystem

In India, [Sugamya Pustakalaya](#) exemplifies how accessible information can be delivered at scale through strong public–private collaboration. Developed through the Access Infinity platform by Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), with support from the Government of India and the Daisy Forum of India, the initiative functions as an accessible national online library for persons with visual impairment and print disabilities.



INDIA'S LARGEST ONLINE LIBRARY FOR BLIND & PRINT DISABLED

Sugamya Pustakalaya Homepage. Source: [Sugamya Pustakalaya](#)

The platform offers content in multiple Indian languages and a wide range of accessible formats, including Braille and Braille tactile, audio, and DAISY text. By extending the role of libraries beyond physical spaces, Sugamya Pustakalaya supports students, jobseekers, and lifelong learners—making inclusive access to knowledge a routine part of the urban information ecosystem.

Importantly, the platform aligns with international copyright frameworks, including the Marrakesh Treaty, and enables publishers and institutions to convert materials into accessible formats efficiently. With free access for persons with disabilities and

partnerships spanning government bodies, educational boards, and civil society organizations, the initiative demonstrates how Healthy Cities can effectively advance accessibility through multi-sectoral collaborations.

The screenshot shows the Sugamya Pustakalaya website interface. At the top, there's a header with the organization's name in Kannada and English, along with logos for TCS, niepva, and DAISY DFI. Below the header is a navigation menu with links: Home, Getting Started, Contact Us, Libraries, and About Us. The main content area is divided into three sections: Search, Search Result, and Login. The Search section has a search bar and a 'Search' button. The Search Result section shows a table of 55 books found, with the first few rows visible. The table has columns for Book Title, Author, Publisher, Library, Format, and Language. The Login section has fields for User ID/Email and Password, a captcha question, and buttons for Login and Register. A sidebar on the left contains links for Advanced Search, Latest Arrivals, Browse, Authors, Categories, Languages, Periodicals, Text Books, Quick Links, News, Frequently Asked Questions, and Accessing Web Services.

Book Title	Author	Publisher	Library	Format	Language
Hegalu-Ondu Manaviya Payana	Bharati Hegade	Benaka Books Bank	Mitrajyothi	DAISY Audio Only	Kannada
Mankuthimmana Kagga - Tathparya Part-2	Shreekanth	Sri H.V. Srikanthan	Mitrajyothi	DAISY Audio Only	Kannada
Mankuthimmana Kagga - Tathparya Part-1	Shreekanth	Sri H.V. Srikanthan	Mitrajyothi	DAISY Audio Only	Kannada
Aarogyamruta Bhaga-1 Sharanara Vachanagalalli Aarogya Parikalpane	Poojya Shri Basavananda Swamygalu	Prabhudeva Prakaashana	Mitrajyothi	DAISY Audio Only	Kannada
Charitryave Jeevana	Dr. M. Ramajols	Prathibha Vikasa Pratishthana	Mitrajyothi	DAISY Audio Only	Kannada

Latest arrival books page. Source: Sugamya Pustakalaya

Looking Ahead: Braille as a Foundation for Inclusive Cities

Together, these examples from Bangladesh and India highlight how Braille continues to evolve—from tactile signage and printed materials to digital platforms that extend access across cities and communities. Whether through smartphone-based learning or accessible digital libraries, Braille remains central to creating urban environments where everyone can access information, learn, and participate on equal terms.

As cities in the WHO South-East Asia Region continue to strengthen Healthy Cities agendas, integrating Braille into both physical and digital infrastructures offers a practical and scalable pathway to inclusion, especially in health awareness and promotion. These innovations demonstrate how small, thoughtful design choices can go a long way in advancing equity, dignity, and well-being for all.

Editor's Pick



What Would A Disability-Inclusive Environment Look Like?

One in six people worldwide lives with a disability, yet many urban environments remain inaccessible. Explore how **Universal Design** can help cities become more inclusive, drawing on practical examples from **Singapore** and **Denmark** that show how thoughtful design and technology support independence and dignity.

[Read more](#)

Stay tuned for more inspiring stories from our healthy cities network in our next update!

Share with us your city's best practices!

[Email Us](#)

WHO South-East Asia office and Regional Laboratory on Urban Governance for Health and Well-being are pleased to invite you to join South-East Asia Region Healthy Cities Network.

More information and details [here](#)

Recommended Resources

Selected resources supporting this issue's theme

[Accessibility lessons from Southeast Asia](#)

[WHO's Action plan for integrated people-centred eye care in South-East Asia 2022–2030](#)

Further Reading & References

World Health Organization. (2022). Action plan for integrated people-centred eye care in South-East Asia 2022–2030. Retrieved from <https://iris.who.int/server/api/core/bitstreams/4ffb747d-a9ec-4068-89e4-4f317e13bffc/content>

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Tata Consultancy Services Limited. (2021). Accessible online library provided for free as a corporate social initiative. Retrieved from <https://zeroproject.org/view/project/384c18bd-8613-eb11-a813-000d3ab9b226#:~:text=Backed%20by%20the%20Government%20of,includes%20content%20in%2017%20languages.>

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