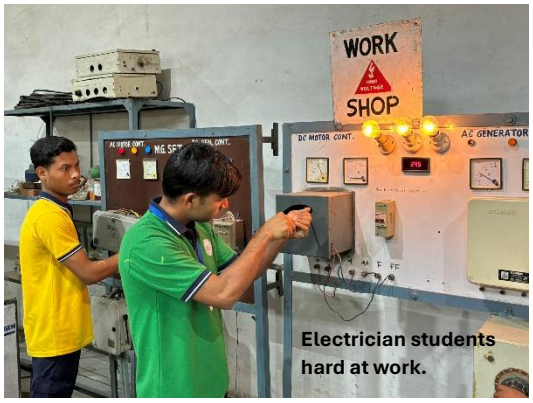
Champa Vocational Training Centre Feedback Report (September 2024-June 2025)

Thank you, The St Lazarus Charitable Trust, for giving young people the skills to get a good job and build a bright future!

Project Background

Young people affected by leprosy have fewer opportunities than their peers. Growing up in poverty, many miss out on a full education. This is because their families often have to prioritise meeting basic needs like food over school fees. This, coupled with a lack of skills, makes it impossible for these young people to get a good job and break out of poverty.



Electrician students hard at work.

As if this wasn't enough, the stigma and discrimination surrounding leprosy makes getting a job even harder. Employers are scared to hire people affected by leprosy because they don't understand the disease.

Your grant has enabled young people to take the first step towards breaking out of poverty. Thanks to you, they have developed marketable skills so that they can get a job and become independent.

Key Achievements

Training in Vocational Skills

With your help, 118 people affected by leprosy and/or disability were trained at the centre during the reporting period. This included 105 people affected by leprosy and 13 people affected by disability. Below is a breakdown of the courses they studied:

Course	Number of Students
Diesel Mechanics	33
Computer Operator and Programming Assistant	35
Electrician	21
Auto Technician	9
Medical Lab Technician Diploma	8
Diploma in Computer Applications	5
Post-graduate Diploma in Computer Applications	7

The centre also offered courses in the community for marginalised girls who were unable to leave their families. These courses included a tailoring course, a beautician course and a mushroom-cultivation course. Two new community-based training centres were set up early in the year, and 131 students studied at these.

As a part of their courses, all students took part in 'on-the-job training'. These placements helped students to apply the theory they had learnt to real-world situations. They were a critical part of the VTC's training programmes. In total, each student completed 150 hours of on-the-job training across the year.

Additional industrial exposure visits were also offered to students on some courses. This furthered their exposure to industry. For instance, electrician students visited a thermal power station. They gained valuable insights into working as an electrician in an industrial setting. They observed operations, met professionals and learned about different equipment used in power distribution. They also deepended their understanding of safety measures.

The centre always strives to share cutting edge technology with students. AI is the latest training provided across all courses. This is important as in the mechanical engineering industry, for example, AI is now used to identify faults with vehicles. It is so important that students are trained in this so that they are employable when they graduate.

Students on the Medical Lab Technician course

A number of industry experts also came to the centre to give guest lectures. These enabled students to benefit from their wealth of knowledge and experience. During these lectures, students asked questions and participated in practical demonstrations.

Employer engagement and help with securing employment

Staff from the VTC continued to build relationships with employers so that they are willing to employ graduates. VTC staff taught the employers about leprosy to address misconceptions about the disease. They also advised on disability access and equal opportunities. This is so important to end discrimination against people affected by leprosy.


Students learning IT skills for the workplace

Follow-up meetings with former students have shown that the VTC's employer engagement continues to be successful. Good working environments are consistently reported.

Students also took part in an employment training programme. This helped them to develop soft skills relevant to the workplace. These included critical thinking and communication skills. They also developed their ability to work as part of a team. This will help bridge the gap between formal education and the world of work. It is hoped that this will give them an edge in today's competitive job market!

The programme also taught students how to find vacancies and be successful in applications. To do this, it taught job search strategies, CV writing and interview techniques. During the reporting period, 18 companies came onto campus to interview students. This enabled many students to get a job for after they graduated.

Thanks to the training and employment support provided by the VTC, 97% of students who graduated in 2025 are now in work or further study. This is an amazing achievement!

Healthcare and awareness

All new students underwent a physical assessment when they joined the VTC in September. This checked whether leprosy had caused a loss of feeling in their hands and feet, whether they could grip a pen and whether they could walk. Any students found to need medical attention were then referred for treatment. This included seven students who needed reconstructive surgery. Throughout the year, high quality medical care was provided to any students who needed treatment.

Students affected by leprosy and/or disability who had lost sensation learned how to care for hands and feet with no feeling. This was part of a wider initiative aimed at preventing injury and preventable disabilities. Dormitory wardens ensured that students followed self-care routines such as soaking feet and rubbing in oil to keep skin supple. This prevents skin tears, cuts and blisters, which can then become infected and ulcerate.

Specialist services were also available for students struggling with their mental health. For instance, a trained counsellor on campus provided support to all students who needed it. This was such an important part of the healthcare you provided. Although the physical effects of leprosy are relatively easy to treat, emotional wounds are much more difficult. Many students have suffered from discrimination and trauma simply because they have leprosy.

Holistic development

The VTC often promotes values such as dedication, commitment, and hard work. But it also encourages participation in all aspects of campus life. This is so that students can develop personally, as well as academically and professionally.


Growing vegetables on campus

The VTC organises a wide range of extracurricular activities for students. These include sport and horticulture. Cricket and a local game called ‘Kabaddi’ are particular favourites. An atmosphere of acceptance and understanding is also fostered throughout the centre. This creates an environment which is conducive to the flourishing of all.

Ganga’s Story

Ganga grew up in a small, rural village in the district of Korba. Born into a family of seven, Ganga was the fifth son of a hardworking dad and devoted mum. His dad worked the land for a living, but poor wages meant it was a struggle to provide for his family. They didn’t have much, but they had each other.

Thankfully, there was enough money to pay for Ganga's school fees. He went to the local village school and dreamed of a future in firefighting. You can imagine his happiness when he was accepted on a fire safety course.

But fate had other plans in store for Ganga. Shortly after starting his course, his hands and legs started to swell. He was desperate to study, so just ignored it until the pain became too much. He visited a government hospital to find out what was causing so much pain.

When Ganga heard the word 'leprosy' he was in shock. He knew about the stigma people with this disease faced. He was terrified. What would this mean for him, and for his future?

He learned that the painful swelling was an immune reaction to the leprosy bacteria in his body. He began treatment immediately, both to cure his leprosy and to fight the reaction symptoms. But sadly, the cure had come too late to prevent terrible nerve damage in his right hand and left foot. The disease had stolen all the feeling in both. If this wasn't bad enough, his fingers began to stiffen and bend into his palms. He couldn't straighten them at all. It was impossible to grip anything or do simple things like button up his clothes. It also became impossible to lift his foot, and he stumbled and fell when he tried to walk.

In the midst of the devastation of leprosy, life threw another crushing blow. Ganga's mum died suddenly, leaving him consumed by grief. Not long after, his father remarried in an attempt to rebuild their lives. But Ganga's new stepmother was not kind to him, and he was neglected.

The pain of being physically disabled and emotionally distressed was overwhelming. One day, feeling utterly hopeless, Ganga attempted to take his own life. For six long hours, he lay alone, teetering between life and death. It was only when his father found him that he was rushed to hospital. Though his body healed, the psychological scarring did not.

It was Champa Vocational Training Centre which finally restored Ganga's hope. After hearing about the training courses on offer for people affected by leprosy, he wasted no time in signing up for a qualification in IT. He loved the course and found great joy in learning.

Part way through his training, Ganga had to take a break from his studies to have reconstructive surgery on his right hand and left foot. This restored Ganga's mobility and meant he could hold a pen properly and walk without help. He resumed his studies with fresh enthusiasm, scoring an impressive 90% in his end of year exams.

Now the team are helping Ganga find a good job, connecting him with employers and guiding him as he prepares for interviews. Thanks to you, his future looks bright! You have provided him with both physical and emotional healing and given him the skills he needs to forge a future.

Ganga is so grateful for your support. He says your encouragement restored his faith in himself and gave him the courage to dream again. Thank you so much for your kindness.