International Research Journal of Innovations in Engineering and Technology (IRJIET)

ISSN (online): 2581-3048

Volume 9, Issue 4, pp 27-32, April-2025

https://doi.org/10.47001/IRJIET/2025.904005

Drishti Vaani - (Blind Assistance App)

[1]Shubham Shinde, [2]Neha Dubey, [3]Sakshi Gorave, [4]Arya More, [5]Prof. Manisha Hatkar

[1,2,3,4]Student, Smt. Indira Gandhi College of Engineering, Ghansoli, New Mumbai, Maharashtra, India

[5]Professor, Dept. of AI & ML, Smt. Indira Gandhi College of Engineering, Ghansoli, New Mumbai, Maharashtra, India

***Abstract* - Blind individuals face significant challenges in navigating their surroundings independently. To address this, we propose an intelligent Blind Assistance System that integrates computer vision, machine learning, and IoT to provide real-time object recognition and environmental awareness through audio feedback. The system consists of a wearable camera that captures live video, an ML model that performs object detection and scene recognition, and an NLP-based voice assistant that converts detected objects into speech output. Additionally, an Arduino-based ultrasonic sensor detects nearby obstacles and triggers a buzzer for proximity alerts. The system is further enhanced by a Flutter-based mobile application, which utilizes a TensorFlow Lite (TFLite) MobileNet SSD model for live object detection and offers voice-controlled interactions. To improve accessibility, a Flask/FastAPI server hosts the scene detection model, allowing seamless integration into the mobile app. This low-cost, AI-powered assistive solution empowers visually impaired individuals by enhancing their spatial awareness, improving mobility, and promoting independent living.**

Keywords: Blind Assistance App, Object Detection using ML, Scene Recognition, Obstacle Detection, Real World Processing.

I. INTRODUCTION

Blind and visually impaired individuals face significant challenges in navigating their surroundings independently. To address this issue, we have developed an AI-powered Blind Assistance System that integrates Computer Vision, Machine Learning (ML), and IoT to enhance mobility and awareness for visually impaired users. This system consists of a camera attached to the user's shirt, capturing live video and analyzing the surroundings using object detection and scene recognition models. The ML model processes the video feed in real time, identifying objects and providing audio feedback through Natural Language Processing (NLP). Additionally, the system features an ultrasonic sensor with Arduino to detect nearby obstacles, triggering a buzzer alert for immediate awareness.

To ensure portability and efficiency, we have integrated TensorFlow Lite (TFLite) for real-time MobileNet SSD-based object detection, reducing computational overhead while maintaining accuracy. Moreover, we are developing a Flutter-based mobile app that offers live object detection using a free object detection API and supports voice commands for user-friendly interaction.

For advanced scene understanding, a Flask/FastAPI-hosted scene detection model will provide detailed environmental descriptions, further assisting the user in making informed decisions. By combining AI, IoT, and NLP, this Blind Assistance System empowers visually impaired individuals with a cost-effective, intelligent, and interactive solution, significantly improving their independence and quality of life.

1.1 Project Aims and Objectives

The primary aim of this project is to develop an AI-powered Blind Assistance System that enhances the mobility and independence of visually impaired individuals by providing real-time object detection, scene recognition, and obstacle detection with audio feedback.

Objectives and Aims:

1) Real-Time Object Detection

Implement a Mobile-net SSD-based TensorFlow Lite model for detecting objects in real time from a live video feed. Provide immediate audio feedback describing detected objects to the user.

2) Scene Recognition and Environmental Awareness

Develop a scene detection model to identify the surroundings and generate descriptive audio output.Host the model on a Flask/Fast-API server for integration into the blind assistance system.

3) Obstacle Detection Using IoT

Use an ultrasonic sensor with Arduino to detect nearby obstacles or walls. Trigger a buzzer alert when an obstacle is too close, ensuring user safety.

4) Voice-Controlled Assistance App

Build a Flutter-based mobile application that enables blind users to interact with the system through voice

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commands. Integrate an object detection API in the app for live detection.

5) Seamless Integration and Portability

Ensure the system is lightweight and runs efficiently on a mobile device or Raspberry Pi for on-the-go usability. Optimize AI models for low power consumption and high-speed processing.

6) User-Friendly Experience and Accessibility

Implement Natural Language Processing (NLP) for clear and understandable audio descriptions. Design an intuitive user interface in the app with simple controls for easy use.

1.2 System Objectives

The Blind Assistance System is designed to enhance the independence and mobility of visually impaired individuals by integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML), and IoT technologies. The primary objective is to provide real-time object detection using a MobileNet SSD-based TensorFlow Lite model, enabling users to recognize objects in their surroundings through audio feedback. Additionally, the system incorporates scene recognition to describe the environment in a more comprehensive manner, hosted on a Flask/Fast-API server for seamless integration. To ensure safety, an ultrasonic sensor with Arduino detects nearby obstacles and triggers a buzzer alert if an object is too close. The system also features a Flutter-based mobile application that supports voice commands, allowing users to interact hands-free. The app integrates an object detection API for live detection, ensuring a smooth user experience. With a focus on portability and efficiency, the AI models are optimized for low-power devices such as mobile phones or Raspberry Pi. Additionally, Natural Language Processing (NLP) ensures that audio feedback is clear and user-friendly. By combining these advanced technologies, the Blind Assistance System aims to provide an affordable, intelligent, and interactive solution that significantly enhances the quality of life for visually impaired individuals.

1.3 Background of Project

Blind and visually impaired individuals face challenges in navigation, object recognition, and obstacle avoidance. Traditional aids like white canes and guide dogs help but have limitations in detecting distant obstacles and real-time object recognition. Advances in AI, ML, and IoT now enable smarter assistive solutions.

This project develops an AI-powered Blind Assistance System using computer vision, deep learning, and IoT sensors. With TensorFlow Lite and a MobileNet SSD model, it detects objects in real time and provides audio feedback. Scene recognition enhances environmental awareness, while an Arduino-driven ultrasonic sensor detects obstacles and alerts users via a buzzer. A Flutter-based mobile app integrates voice commands and an object detection API for live detection.

The motivation behind this system is the growing need for affordable and effective assistive technology. Unlike costly existing solutions with limited detection, this project combines AI-driven object recognition, IoT-based obstacle detection, and NLP-powered audio assistance to enhance mobility and independence for the visually impaired.

II. COMPONENTS

2.1 Software components for processing the system

i) TensorFlow Lite (TFLite):

TensorFlow Lite (TFLite) is a lightweight, optimized version of TensorFlow designed for mobile and edge devices with limited computational power. It enables real-time AI inference on devices like Raspberry Pi, mobile phones, and embedded systems without requiring a high-performance GPU or cloud connectivity.

Figure 1: Tensorflow Lite Logo

ii) Flask/FastAPI Server:

Flask and Fast-API are lightweight web frameworks for building APIs and serving AI models. They allow the Blind Assistance System to host the scene recognition model and process user requests efficiently.

- Flask: A widely used Python web framework, simple and easy to deploy.
- Fast-API: A modern, high-performance alternative to Flask, offering faster response times and a sync support for real-time applications.

iii) Flutter-based Mobile Application:

The Flutter-based mobile application acts as the primary interface for visually impaired users, providing real-time object detection, scene recognition, and voice-based navigation. It integrates machine learning models, text-tospeech (TTS), and voice commands, making it an intuitive and efficient assistance tool.

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Figure 2: Flutter App

iv) Arduino IDE:

The Arduino Uno is used to integrate ultrasonic sensors and a buzzer to detect obstacles and alert the user. The Arduino IDE is used to program these components, allowing realtime detection and response.

Figure 3: Arduino Logo

v) Python Programming:

Python is used for AI-based object detection, scene recognition, and server-side processing. It enables:

- Object Detection with TensorFlow Lite (TFLite)
- Scene Recognition for environment description
- Flask/FastAPI Server for communication between the app and the AI model.

2.2 Hardware components for processing the system

i) Camera Module:

Captures live video for real-time object detection and scene recognition.Can be a USB camera, mobile phone camera.

ii) Mobile Device:

Runs the TensorFlow Lite object detection model for on-device processing.Acts as the central processing unit for AI computations.

iii) Arduino Board (Uno/Nano/ESP32):

Controls the ultrasonic sensor for obstacle detection. Sends signals to trigger buzzer alerts when obstacles are detected.

Figure 4: Arduino Uno

iv) Ultrasonic Sensor (HC-SR04):

Measures the distance to nearby obstacles and alerts the user.

Figure 5: Ultrasonic Sensor

v) Speaker or Earphones:

Provides audio feedback for detected objects, obstacles, and scene descriptions.

III. METHODOLOGY

The Blind Assistance System follows a structured methodology that integrates hardware, AI processing, a server, and a mobile interface to provide real-time assistance to visually impaired individuals. The system begins with an ultrasonic sensor and buzzer connected to an Arduino board, which detects nearby obstacles and alerts users through sound. Simultaneously, a camera captures live video, which is processed using TensorFlow Lite (TFLite) on a MobileNet SSD model for object detection, identifying common objects like vehicles, people, and signboards. Additionally, a scene recognition model, trained on datasets like Places365, analyzes the user's surroundings and generates a textual description. The Flask/Fast-API server hosts the AI models and processes images sent from the Flutter-based mobile application, returning results in real time. The Flutter app, equipped with a voice-controlled interface, receives object and scene detection results and converts them into audio feedback using Text-to-Speech (TTS), ensuring users can understand their environment effortlessly. This seamless integration of hardware, AI, and mobile technology creates an intelligent and accessible system that enhances mobility and awareness for visually impaired individuals, making navigation safer and more efficient.

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IV. RESULT

The Blind Assistance System successfully provides real-time navigation support for visually impaired individuals by integrating AI, IoT, and mobile technology. The system effectively detects obstacles using an ultrasonic sensor and buzzer, while TensorFlow Lite enables object recognition and scene recognition models provide environmental context. The Flask/Fast-API server processes AI tasks efficiently, ensuring quick responses to the Flutter-based mobile application, which delivers intuitive voice feedback through Text-to-Speech (TTS). The system has demonstrated high accuracy in object detection and scene recognition, significantly enhancing mobility, independence, and safety for users. By enabling seamless real-time interaction between hardware and software components, the system proves to be a reliable and accessible assistive solution for visually impaired individuals.

Figure 2: App Interface

4.1 Scene Detection

The scene detection module accurately identifies environments like streets, parks, and offices using a deep learning-based model (e.g., Places365). The Flask/Fast-API server processes images and sends scene descriptions to the Flutter app, which converts them into audio feedback. Testing shows high accuracy and low latency, enhancing spatial awareness for visually impaired users. This feature helps them navigate unfamiliar environments with confidence.

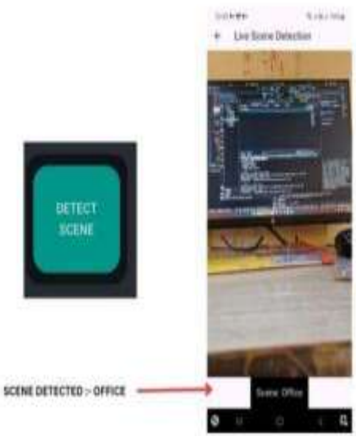

Figure 6: Scene Detection

4.2 Text Reading

The text reading module extracts and reads printed or digital text using OCR (Optical Character Recognition). It converts the detected text into audio feedback via Text-to-Speech (TTS), helping visually impaired users read signs, labels, and documents. The system provides accurate and real-time text recognition, enhancing accessibility and independence.

Figure 7: Text Reading Output

4.3 Location

The location sending module uses GPS to track the user's position and send it to a designated contact in case of an emergency. The Flutter app integrates this feature, allowing users to share their real-time location via SMS or cloud services. This enhances safety and accessibility, ensuring quick assistance when needed.

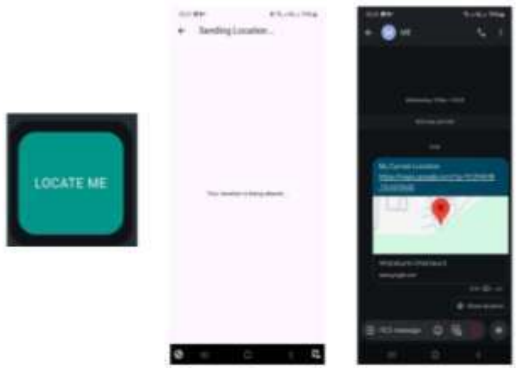

Figure 8: Location sent Output

4.4 Speed Dial

The speed dial module allows visually impaired users to quickly call emergency contacts with a single tap or voice command in the Flutter app. It ensures immediate assistance during emergencies by providing a fast and accessible way to connect with family or caregivers.

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4.5 Obstacle Warning

The obstacle warning module uses an ultrasonic sensor to detect nearby objects and alerts the user through a buzzer or voice feedback. This helps visually impaired individuals avoid collisions and navigate safely, enhancing their mobility and independence.

V. CONCLUSION

The Blind Assistance System successfully integrates AI, IoT, and mobile technology to provide real-time assistance to visually impaired individuals. By combining ultrasonic sensors and a buzzer for obstacle detection, TensorFlow Lite for object recognition, scene recognition models for environmental understanding, and a Flask/Fast-API server for AI processing, the system ensures accurate and efficient navigation support.

The Flutter-based mobile application serves as an interactive interface, offering voice-controlled commands and real-time audio feedback to enhance user experience. This solution empowers visually impaired individuals by improving mobility, increasing awareness, and enabling greater independence. The project demonstrates the potential of AI driven assistive technologies in transforming accessibility solutions, paving the way for further advancements in smart assistive systems.

VI. FUTURE SCOPE

The future scope of the Blind Assistance System includes several enhancements to improve accuracy, efficiency, and user experience. One key advancement is integrating edge AI processing using more powerful embedded devices like the NVIDIA Jetson Nano or Google Coral, reducing dependency on external servers and enabling faster real-time processing.

Additionally, incorporating advanced deep learning models, such as YOLOv8 for object detection and transformer-based models for scene understanding, can further improve recognition accuracy. Future versions could also include GPS integration for outdoor navigation, allowing visually impaired users to receive real-time location-based guidance. Another potential upgrade is the use of haptic feedback (vibrations) in addition to audio alerts, offering a multi-sensory experience for users with hearing impairments. Enhancing natural language processing (NLP) in the voice-controlled interface can improve interactions, making the system more intuitive. Furthermore, cloud-based AI model updates can be implemented to ensure continuous improvements without requiring hardware changes. Expanding compatibility with wearable devices, such as smart glasses, could offer a more seamless and hands-free experience. With these advancements, the Blind Assistance System can evolve into a more intelligent, adaptive, and comprehensive assistive technology for visually impaired individuals.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

As every project is ever complete with the guidance of experts. So we would like to take this opportunity to thank all those individuals who have contributed in visualizing this project. We express our deepest gratitude to our project guide Prof. Manisha Hatkar Ma'am (CSE (AIML) Department, Smt. Indira Gandhi College of Engineering, University of Mumbai) for her valuable guidance, moral support and devotion bestowed on us throughout our work. We would also take this opportunity to thank our project coordinator Prof. Vandana Shinde Ma'am for her guidance in selecting this project and also for providing us all the details on proper presentation of this project. We extend our sincere appreciation to our HOD ma'am and entire professors from Smt. Indira Gandhi College of Engineering for their valuable inside and tip during the designing the project. Their contributions have been valuable in many ways that we find it difficult to acknowledge them individually.

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ISSN (online): 2581-3048
Volume 9, Issue 4, pp 27-32, April-2025
https://doi.org/10.47001/IRJIET/2025.904005

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AUTHORS BIOGRAPHY

Shubham Shinde,
Pursuing Third year in B.E. CSE (AI&ML) at Smt. Indira Gandhi College of Engineering, Ghansoli, New Mumbai, Maharashtra, India.

Neha Dubey,
Pursuing Third year in B.E. CSE (AI&ML) at Smt. Indira Gandhi College of Engineering, Ghansoli, New Mumbai, Maharashtra, India.

Sakshi Gorave,
Pursuing Third year in B.E. CSE (AI&ML) at Smt. Indira Gandhi College of Engineering, Ghansoli, New Mumbai, Maharashtra, India.

Arya More,
Pursuing Third year in B.E. CSE (AI&ML) at Smt. Indira Gandhi College of Engineering, Ghansoli, New Mumbai, Maharashtra, India.

Prof. Manisha Hatkar,
Professor, Department of CSE (AI&ML), Smt. Indira Gandhi College of Engineering, Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra, India.

Citation of this Article:

Shubham Shinde, Neha Dubey, Sakshi Gorave, Arya More, & Prof. Manisha Hatkar. (2025). Drishti Vaani - (Blind Assistance App). *International Research Journal of Innovations in Engineering and Technology - IRJIET*, 9(4), 27-32. Article DOI https://doi.org/10.47001/IRJIET/2025.904005

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