REPORT ON THE NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON ‘MAINSTREAMING DISABILITY INCLUSION INTO URBAN FUTURES’

DATE: 2ND DECEMBER 2021
TIME: 10:00 A.M. - 5:30 P.M

BUILDING ACCESSIBLE, SAFE AND INCLUSIVE INDIAN CITIES PROGRAMME
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF URBAN AFFAIRS
Introduction

The World Health Organisation estimates more than one billion people, i.e., about 15% of the world’s population, experience some form of disability. For this reason, in various ways, Sustainable Development Goals talk explicitly about in parts related to education, growth and employment, inequality, accessibility of human settlements, and data collection and monitoring of the SDGs to empower those who are vulnerable in society. In this context, the National Institute of Urban Affairs, through the BASIIC program, is taking the initiative of addressing these inequalities and mainstreaming inclusion into the urban agenda.

Building Accessible Safe Inclusive Indian Cities’ (BASIIC) program at the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) has been developed with the support from the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) of the UK government. The program was founded on the recommendations highlighted in the consultation convened under the chairmanship of Hon’ble Minister Sh. Hardeep Singh Puri. Held in September 2018, the consultation invited expert insights on framing measures and policy recommendations for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs). The principal goal of BASIIC is to build the capacities of Indian cities and practitioners to be sensitive and responsive to the needs of Persons with Disabilities. BASIIC endeavours to promulgate aspects of “Accessibility, Safety, and Inclusivity” into the fabric of urban development.

BASIIC Programme triggered an aspirational dream of streamlining the concepts of inclusion and digital learning into the urban ecosystem. During its two year duration, BASIIC has researched extensively on the existing key issues w.r.t. the physical, institutional and economic infrastructure for Persons with Disabilities, and conducted various audits and capacity building programmes at the city level. The findings of these activities led to the identification of problems that lie at the heart of urban practices and restrict inclusive development. They are compiled in the form of various guidelines, frameworks and other knowledge products.

About the Workshop

The national workshop on ‘Mainstreaming Disability Inclusion to transform Urban futures’ was held on 2nd December 2021 to commemorate the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, an annual observance held on 3rd December. The workshop was organised to disseminate the learnings gathered under the two-year journey of the BASIIC programme.
Along with this, the aim was to also seek prospective collaborations for strengthening the work on inclusion - in terms of knowledge creation and for providing implementation support to cities. The objectives of the workshop included; the dissemination of guidelines and standards to policymakers and other stakeholders for inclusive development, capacity building for inclusive city planning and design of various stakeholders involved in the urban sector, identification and deliberation of mechanisms to resolve barriers for implementation and integration of inclusion in urban development, and exploration of strategic partnerships and priority areas for translating action research into on-ground implementation.

The workshop consisted of three-panel discussions that initiated thought-provoking discussions to understand the different perspectives of various stakeholders. The workshop aimed to advocate “Inclusion” in thought and practice for empowering the marginalised groups towards becoming active contributors to India’s socio-economic growth. The workshop also showcased NIUA’s partnership with premier national and international institutions which have been pivotal in the programme’s success and would further play an important role in strategizing on-ground implementation of the learnings from the BASIIC Programme.

The workshop was hosted in-person and virtually, which witnessed a participation of ~170 people. The delegation included our partners in change and representatives from- the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), United Nations, National Institute of Urban Affairs, Premier Academic institutions like IIT-Kharagpur, IIT-Roorkee, School of Planning and Architecture (Delhi), Municipal Corporations, SPVs, State Disability Commissioners, District Welfare Officers and Town and Country Planning Departments, along with domain experts, young professionals and active members from CSOs/DPOs. The event also facilitated the winners of the ‘Design it Accessible’ challenge, organised by BASIIC and NOSPlan.

**Inaugural Session and Launch of BASIIC Knowledge Products**

The National workshop was graced by the presence of Hon’ble Secretary of MoHUA; Shri. Durga Shanker Mishra. He launched the two transformational documents i.e. ‘Harmonised Guidelines and Standards for Universal Accessibility in India, 2021’ and ‘Inclusive City framework’ developed under the BASIIC Programme. During the launch, he highlighted how the workshop is the start of an inclusive practice that is yet to reach a long mile and must be adopted widely in the urban sector for providing Persons with Disabilities with a supportive infrastructure that enables them to use their skills. With this, he urged all the stakeholders at the city and state level in the urban sector to adopt these guidelines and knowledge products into their city development process and work towards this vision by constructing infrastructure that is inclusive, accessible and safe for all PwDs.
he other dignitaries present on the dais during the inaugural session who have played a pivotal role in the formulation and development of these guidelines and frameworks were; Mr. Alexander Ellis (British High Commissioner to India, UK Government), Shri. Ved Prakash, (Joint Secretary (Works), Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs), Shri. Hitesh Vaidya (Director, NIUA), Prof. Gaurav Raheja (IIT-Roorkee) and Prof. Subrata Chattopadhyay (IIT-Kharagpur).

Guidelines and Knowledge Products launched during the Workshop*

1. Harmonised Guidelines for Universal Accessibility in India, 2021
   The guidelines were developed under the strategic partnership with the Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee for the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Delhi. They depict a shift from a barrier-free approach to a universal design approach by representing diversity and pluralism as the foundation of a universally accessible and inclusive India.

*Available on NIUA’s Website
2. Inclusive City Framework
The framework aids cities in the sector-wise assessment of safety, accessibility and inclusivity and provides Inclusivity Score/Star Rating to cities on the basis of audits conducted. It ensures the engagement of all stakeholders and beneficiaries involved by proposing sustainable and user-centric guidelines and future pathways in terms of planning, implementation and review for inclusivity.

3. Technical Assistance Report
The report identifies existing urban issues related to accessibility and is a guide to assess and manage urban functions. It formulates city-specific strategies for facilitating technical assistance and support to ULBs and provides strategies to identify, select and collaborate with partner cities.

4. City Audit Assessment Report
The report assesses compliance of existing infrastructure with policies/guidelines/development norms. It captures the performance of urban development initiatives w.r.t. accessibility, and guides and promotes an Integrated Approach for Inclusive Development.
5. Compendium of Global Good Practices
The compendium is a ready reckoner for city stakeholders to take lessons from global good practices and adopt these to improve the everyday lives of PwDs living in urban areas.

6. Learning from our Cities Compendium
The compendium offers lessons on good practices across the world to help Indian cities in strengthening their efforts towards COVID-19 mitigation for PwDs, the elderly and young children.

7. Review and Evaluation of Policy Landscape for an Accessible, Safe & Inclusive City
The document identifies the challenges and gaps in the urban mechanism for Persons with Disabilities, the Elderly, Children. It provides broad recommendations to overcome these gaps by analysing the existing national and international mandates/frameworks/policies/programmes.
8. Video developed by Leewardists on ‘An Inclusive City, Built for All’
The video consisted of a series of pictorial depictions of what is a socially, economically and physically inclusive city and how it gets reflected in our built infrastructure. to watch the video, follow the link, https://youtu.be/gApny7Te-WU

**Technical Session 1: Mainstreaming Inclusion for Sustainable City Development**

**Chair**
Mr. Shantanu Mitra (Head, Infrastructure & Urban Development, FCDO)

**Panellists**
Ms. Aparna Das (Senior Advisor, GIZ), Dr. D Vasudevan (Chief General Manager, Varanasi Smart City Limited) and Mr. Nipun Malhotra (NIPMAN Foundation)

**Presentations**
- Mr. Ajay Suri (Senior Advisor and Head of Inclusive Cities Centre, NIUA) presented NIUA’s vision of inclusivity for driving inclusive planning in improving the lives of all marginalised sections.
- Ms. Kakul Mishra and Ms. Sreenandini Banerjee (Centre for Digital Governance, NIUA) presented the ecosystem approach towards capacity development, and how it supports and enables urban administrators in skill and knowledge enhancements.
- Mr. Utsav Chaudhury (Team Lead, BASIIC, NIUA) presented BASIIC Programme's journey and achievements.
- Mr. Abhinav Kaushal (Varanasi Smart City Limited) presented the assistance provided to Varanasi Smart City
- Mr. Iain McKinnon (GDI Hub) presented Varanasi Audit case study w.r.t. practices prevalent on inclusive design and accessibility, existing barriers in inclusion, and importance of inclusive city design and planning.
- Mr. Pashim Tiwari (AIILSG) talked about the ‘Journey towards Mainstreaming Disability Inclusion’.

The presentations highlighted how the engagement of Varanasi city with the BASIIC programme has mainstreamed inclusion as an underlying component of various developmental projects. They also highlighted the importance of engaging with the local government, policy and industry stakeholders to lead to accountability in inclusive planning. It also highlighted issues i.e. lack of budgets and funding, lack of capacity to create inclusive infrastructure in cities, and discussed the significance of the collaborations and hand-holding to steer up inclusivity in more cities.
The presentations also indicated the need for innovative platforms like NULP, to facilitate self-paced learning on topics related to inclusive development. It also presented a 360-degree approach including aspects of social, economic, digital and spatial components to Inclusion of all.

Panel discussion

Different aspects were suggested to be dealt with at various levels. For instance, minimum requirements of inclusivity and challenges that restrict policy guidelines to be translated into practice should be addressed at the city level while building capacities measures should be taken up at the community level. Practices of universal and barrier-free design for basic infrastructures such as ATMs and toilets were suggested to imbibe a sense of independence among Persons with Disabilities and other vulnerable demographics. The need for sustainable and geography-specific aspects to be included while building accessible cities was also highlighted. Incorporating accountability in inclusive practices was also discussed as a key strategy to bring long term impacts.

The key findings of the session include - Adoption of a multi-scale approach due to the sheer complexity of the issue; Creation and updating of frameworks to solve problems that have persisted for a long time; Inclusive development projects must be undertaken in Tier 2 cities with a considerable amount of time undertaken for them without locking on any fixed outcomes; and Change in the fundamentals of governance by bringing in accountability for accessibility compliance.
Technical Session 2: Actionizing India’s Commitment to achieve Universal Accessibility and Inclusion

Chair
Mr. Harpreet Singh Arora (Urban Advisor, FCDO)

Presentations
- Prof. Gaurav Raheja (Architecture and Planning, Head of Department, IIT Roorkee) talked about the Harmonised Guidelines and Standards for Universal Accessibility in India and the prevalent design practices responsible for the exclusion of Persons with Disabilities in built environments.
- Ms. Kanika Bansal (Senior Associate, BASIIC Project, NIUA) presented the sevenfold approach towards inclusion and revitalisation of the national action plan for barrier-free cities.

The session covered topics related to the existing barriers to inclusion in the city development including insensitive design practices, inequity in the planning process and non-consideration of diversities in the population. The presentations talked in detail about the diversity in the type of disabilities, the existing inequalities in the institutional approach towards PwDs, the key elements and the significance of universal accessibility, and the approach and methodology required for inclusivity. The presentation also discussed strategies for the way forward by highlighting how the approach towards inclusion can be transformed from an activist model to a progressive model through a sevenfold approach. The session also highlighted the need for rejuvenation of the National Action Plan on universal accessibility for the empowerment of Persons with Disabilities.
Open Discussion

Topics about different disabilities and the approach towards dealing with disabilities in India were addressed. These included discussions related to the existing unaccountability in governance towards mental disability, change of approach from activism to approach and mainstream it into major policy scenarios and solutions towards these problems. The issues addressed in the open discussion included educating, sensitising and transformation of public behaviour to create a demand for nudging the policy scenario.

Mr. Harpreet Singh Arora concluded the session by highlighting the following key findings:
- Identification of key concepts for equity, the existing barriers and ways to access resources;
- Need for a participatory planning approach for universal accessibility and inclusion;
- Need for realising individual and professional responsibilities towards building a ‘City for All’;
- Need for sensitisation for ensuring inclusion, and
- Need for demonstration of the inclusive guidelines into real projects.

Technical Session 3: Need for Periodic Assessment of Inclusion, Access and Safety in Cities

Chair
Dr. Debolina Kundu (Associate Professor, NIUA)

Panellists
Mr. Ranjan Mukherjee (State Commissioner of PwDs, NCT Delhi), Mr. Subhash C. Vashist (CABE Foundation), Mr. P. P. Singh (Chief Town Planner State Town Planning Department, Haryana) and Mr. R Srinivas (Town and Country Planning Organisation).

Presentations
- Prof. Subrata Chattopadhyay (Department of Architecture and Planning, IIT Kharagpur) presented his approach towards accessibility with various examples, the importance of planning and economic sustainability in inclusivity.
- Prof. Haimanti Banerji (Department of Architecture and Planning, IIT Kharagpur) presented their approach towards accessibility and the research they carried out and how it aided in making suggestions for amending the URDPFI Guidelines.

The presentations involved an explanation of the concept of accessibility for different people and the need to develop economically sustainable models for accessible and inclusive projects and products. Along with this, the presentations included a detailed approach adopted for the development of Harmonised Guidelines and Inclusive Cities Framework developed with the aim of providing a sense of security, psychological comfort, economic independence, decent quality of life, feeling of self-worth, social acceptance and safety for vulnerable communities.
Panel discussion

In addition to these issues, the panel deliberated on how national guidelines and bye-laws in India play an important role in promoting accessibility and inclusion. Hence, how pressing is the need to have a streamlined policy approach towards disability to avoid furthermore confusion in city planning activities that arise out of the conflict of interest within organisations owing to similar roles and responsibilities.

The session progressed with discussions on the roles and responsibilities of the government officials that work closely with Persons with Disabilities. The topic led to an exchange of thoughts regarding challenges faced in the process of executing inclusive projects on-ground, lack of financial support provided to aid research, data collection, capacity building or any kind of on-ground implementation of inclusive and accessible projects. Another recurring problem that came to light in the other panel discussions too, was the issue of lack of sensitivity regarding the issue in the entire urban ecosystem ranging from the public to the private and public sector stakeholders. Emergent efforts to undertake sensitisation activities w.r.t. PwDs was the consensus among all the panellists. As a part of this, the panel discussed how introducing the topic of inclusivity and accessibility in academics will imbibe sensitive practices in real life. The panel also discussed strategies that could be adopted to undertake provisions suggested in the Inclusive Cities Framework.
Dr. Debolina Kundu concluded Technical Session 3 by highlighting the following findings: Need for capacity building in executing projects at the state, central and city level; Need of a robust dataset for accessible, safe and inclusive development; Need for sensitisation of the entire urban ecosystem with regards to inclusion; Need for making provisions in the academic syllabus for inclusion; and Need for updating the NBC Codes and various other important frameworks to incorporate Inclusion, Safety and Accessibility while executing the urban sector projects.

Concluding Session

The event came to an end with summarisation and concluding remarks by Mr. Ajay Suri, (Senior Advisor and Head of Inclusive Cities Centre, NIUA). He expressed his expectations for finding more avenues to collectively work with prospective partners for mainstreaming inclusion within the urban agenda to transform the urban futures of vulnerable groups, especially Persons with Disabilities, the elderly, children and women. The workshop concluded with the vision of finding innovative ways to address and respond to the inequalities faced by the vulnerable groups as a commitment towards tangible action-oriented interventions and projects to create a more just and equal urban ecosystem for everyone.
Key Findings from the workshop

Following key findings were recognised from the discussions that took place across all the sessions in the national workshop:

A. Policy and Institutional Frameworks
   1. Identification of innovative solutions to resolve existing inequity, the existing barriers and ways to access resources.
   2. Need for updating the building bye-laws and other statutory frameworks to incorporate Inclusion, Safety and Accessibility as key principles while executing the urban development projects.
   3. Fundamental governance issues related to Persons with Disabilities must be addressed by bringing accountability into the system.
   4. A multi-scale and participatory planning approach is required for mainstreaming inclusivity into urban development.
   5. Creation and updating of frameworks as a starting point to solve problems that have persisted for a long time.
   6. Need of robust datasets for accessible, safe and inclusive development.

B. Sensitization and Capacity Building Interventions
   1. Sensitisation and creating awareness amongst the public on a personal as well as professional level towards building a ‘City for All’.
   2. Strengthening of the academic syllabus to imbibe aspects of inclusion in budding professionals.
   3. Need for sensitisation in both public and private sectors for ensuring inclusion.
   4. Need of capacity building for executing projects at the state, central and city level.

C. On-Ground Project Implementation
   1. Need for the manifestation of inclusive guidelines in the form of real projects.
   2. Undertaking inclusive development projects in Tier 2 cities for a considerable amount of time without locking any fixed outcomes.
Way Forward

The launch of the knowledge products developed so far under the BASIIC Programme at the national workshop brought to light certain key findings that are central to achieving inclusion holistically. The key findings listed along with seeking on-ground implementation of inclusive projects, point towards works required on policy and capacity building levels. On the basis of these, long term and short term actions items have been formulated, which can prove instrumental in exploring new arenas that require disability inclusion.

Immediate Actions Items include:

- Dissemination of the guidelines and standards to different implementing agencies and stakeholders across the country.
- Knowledge needs assessment for effective implementation of different guidelines and standards developed and launched during the workshop.
- Sensitising the entire urban ecosystem through knowledge dissemination as well as other interactive outreach activities.

Long Term Action Items include:

- Building capacities of the stakeholders for effective implementation of universal accessibility guidelines and standards.
- Supporting the cities in integrating these guidelines and standards into their statutory and legal frameworks.
- Fostering grassroots level partnerships for identifying contextual solutions to the existing barriers and challenges.
- Conducting consultations and various workshops for understanding the challenges faced by Persons with Disabilities.
- Establishing partnerships with various stakeholders at the grassroots level for the accumulation of disaggregated data.
- Engaging with various premier academic institutions and student organisations to take up academic exercises focused on the tenets of accessibility, safety and inclusivity.
- Identifying Tier 1 and Tier 2 cities for implementation of inclusive urban development projects
To know more about the workshop

You may listen to the recordings of different sessions on the official YouTube channel of NIUA through the links given below-

- Web Link for the Inaugural Session: [https://youtu.be/E7rNub0b_LY](https://youtu.be/E7rNub0b_LY)
- Web Link for the Sessions 1 and 2: [https://youtu.be/I2ovqCSU1AQ](https://youtu.be/I2ovqCSU1AQ)
- Web Link for the Session 3: [https://youtu.be/1HgV4nmcfEw](https://youtu.be/1HgV4nmcfEw)

An article about the workshop was also published in *The Times of India*. 