

Disability and Accessibility

Initiatives by ICMR



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INTRODUCTION

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), New Delhi, the apex body in India for the formulation, coordination and promotion of biomedical research. ICMR is one of the oldest medical research institutions which spearheads bio-medical and health research in the country. ICMR's mandate covers capacity building in research in the country; providing fellowships and funding to foster research in medical colleges and research/academic institutions; initiate nationwide task force projects oriented to new knowledge generation, technology development, evaluation of products or interventions and generating evidence for programmatic improvement and policy, making it the foremost research body that works to promote, formulate, fund and co-ordinate biomedical research in India. ICMR works in close collaboration with all science ministries and departments as well as the department of health and ministry of AYUSH.

ICMR's research priorities are aligned to the nation's health priorities. Research has focused on maternal and child health, nutrition, communicable diseases and non-communicable diseases. The Council promotes biomedical research in the country through intramural and extramural research undertaken by a network of affiliated 25 National institutions/Research Institute/ Regional Medical Research Centre and also supports Centres of Excellence in key areas to undertake cutting edge research. ICMR plays a crucial role in India's public health landscape. They are undertaking innovative or pioneering research by addressing problems associated with individual health as well as with public health.

Intramural research is carried out currently through the Council's 25 Research Institutes/Centres/Units. These include (i) 19 mission-oriented national institutes located in different parts of India that address themselves to research on specific areas such as tuberculosis, leprosy, cholera and diarrhoeal diseases, viral diseases including AIDS, malaria, kala-azar, vector control, nutrition, reproductive health, immunohaematology, oncology, medical statistics, etc; (ii) 6 Regional Medical Research Centres/Research Institute that address regional health problems, and also aim to strengthen or generate research capabilities in different geographic areas of the country, dealing with food & drug toxicology, viral diseases, handling microorganisms of highly infectious nature, prenatal diagnosis for neonatal retardation etc and supply of various animal models and feeds for experimental purposes.

Extramural research is promoted by ICMR through (i) Setting up Centres for Advanced Research in different research areas around existing expertise and infrastructure in selected departments of Medical Colleges, Universities and other non-ICMR Research Institutes. (ii) Task force studies which emphasize a time-bound, goal-oriented approach

with clearly defined targets, specific time frames, standardized and uniform methodologies, and often a multicentric structure.(iii) Open-ended research on the basis of applications for grants-in-aid received from scientists in non-ICMR Research Institutes, Medical colleges, Universities etc. located in different parts of the country.

In addition to research activities, the ICMR encourages human resource development in biomedical research through (i) Research Fellowships (ii) Short-Term Visiting Fellowships. (iii) Short-Term Research Studentships. (iv) Various Training Programmes and Workshops conducted by ICMR Institutes and Headquarters.

Realizing the critical role of Information and communication technologies (ICT), the organization established Local Area Network (LAN) in ICMR. ICMR has installed and is managing Local Area Network (LAN) consisting of over around 4600 nodes spread across 25 institutes of ICMR. Internet access is provided through 2X2 Mbps line from NIC and 1Gbps line from NKN at each location. ICMR has established and managing Video Conferencing facility at eight major institutes of ICMR. Recently ICMR has signed an MoU with the project ECHO for setting up ICT enabled communication across the network. The facility is being used extensively for National and International Conferencing and meetings. ICMR is also managing centralized email and antivirus services.

The ICT setup at ICMR is being used extensively for facilitating and managing research activities which include developing and managing epidemiological, biochemical, clinical and patient data on various diseases including sensitive diseases such as Leprosy, tuberculosis, STDs etc.

Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) launched the Accessible India Campaign (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan) as a nation-wide Campaign for achieving universal accessibility for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) on December 3, 2015. It has three important verticals, namely - the Build Environment, the transportation sector and the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) ecosystem. As per the ICT ecosystem, the website under different ministries should be made disable friendly by June 2022. Also as per the Rights of Persons With Disabilities (RPWD) ACT, 2016, the disability legislation passed by the Indian Parliament to fulfill its obligation to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which India ratified in 2007. It provides the right to the PWD enjoy the right to equality, life with dignity, and respect for his or her own integrity equally with others.

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) is committed to fostering a culture of inclusivity and accessibility, recognizing the inherent value of diversity and the importance of equal access to opportunities. To achieve this, ICMR has undertaken a

comprehensive approach to transform its digital and physical infrastructure, ensuring seamless navigation and engagement for individuals with disabilities. This includes adhering to web accessibility guidelines, enhancing website navigation, conducting accessibility audits, organizing capacity-building workshops, and establishing a network of trained Nodal Officers. By prioritizing accessibility and inclusivity, ICMR aims to create a more equitable healthcare research ecosystem, valuing diversity, promoting participation, and celebrating contributions of all individuals, regardless of their abilities.

Introduction of RPwD Act 2016

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (RPWD Act) is a groundbreaking legislation that revolutionizes the lives of persons with disabilities in India. Enacted on December 28, 2016, this Act replaces the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995, and recognizes the rights of persons with disabilities to equality, dignity, and autonomy.

Key Provisions of the RPWD Act 2016

- **Comprehensive Coverage:** The Act covers a wide range of disabilities, including physical, mental, intellectual, and sensory disabilities.
- **Accessibility and Inclusion:** The Act provides for various measures to ensure accessibility, education, employment, and social security for persons with disabilities.
- **Barrier-Free Society:** The RPWD Act 2016 aims to create an inclusive and barrier-free society, where persons with disabilities can live with dignity and participate fully in all aspects of life.

ICMR Initiatives for Accessible Websites

The new ICMR website has been designed and developed with a focus on accessibility, usability, and overall user experience. The website adheres to the GIGW Guidelines for accessibility, ensuring that it is inclusive and user-friendly for all.

- Modern Design Standards: The website features a clean and intuitive layout, aligning with modern design standards.
- Consistent Design and Layout: The design and layout are consistent across different sections, providing a seamless user experience.
- Improved Navigation and Search Functionality: The website features improved navigation and search functionality, making it easier for users to find the information they need.
- Updated and Comprehensive Content: The website features updated and comprehensive content, including features to update contents, circulars, notices, schemes, etc. in accessible formats such as PDF, HTML, and text formats, ensuring that users with disabilities can access the content.
- User-Focused Content: The content is tailored to the needs of various user groups, including researchers, healthcare professionals, and the general public.
- Text/Font Size Changes: The website allows users to change text/font sizes, ensuring readability for users with visual impairments.
- Contrast Feature: The website features a contrast feature, allowing users to adjust the color scheme to suit their visual needs.
- Language Adaptability: The website is adaptable to different languages, ensuring that users who speak different languages can access the content.
- Screen Reader Compatibility and Accessibility: The website is compatible with screen readers, enabling users with visual impairments to access content. Screen reader users can access the website's content using popular screen readers like JAWS, NVDA, and VoiceOver.
- Keyboard Navigation: The website allows users to navigate using their keyboard, providing accessibility for users with mobility impairments.
- Fast Loading Times: The website features fast loading times, ensuring a better user experience, particularly for users with slower internet connections or people with cognitive impairments.
- Reliable Links and Pages: All links and pages load correctly, ensuring the site's reliability.
- Robust Security Measures: The website features robust security measures, including SSL certification and up-to-date security protocols, to protect users' data.
- Compatibility: The website is compatible with all browsers and operating systems, ensuring that it functions correctly for all users.
- Interactive Elements: The website includes interactive elements, such as videos, infographics, and interactive charts, to make the content more engaging.

In conclusion, the new ICMR website is a significant step forward in providing a user-friendly, accessible, and informative platform for all stakeholders. With its modern design, robust security measures, and accessibility features, the website is poised to become a leading resource for medical research and healthcare information in India.

ICMR Initiatives for Accessibility and Inclusion

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has embarked on a transformative journey to promote accessibility and inclusivity in its workplaces. A dedicated "Committee on Creating Enabling & Accessible Environments" has been established at ICMR Headquarters and Institutes to identify and address accessibility barriers, ensuring equal opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Commitment to Accessibility

- The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) is committed to promoting accessibility and inclusivity for persons with disabilities (PwDs). To achieve this goal, ICMR has made the following commitments:
- The preparation of the ICMR policy on Accessibility, Disability, and Inclusive ICMR is underway. This policy aims to provide a framework for promoting accessibility, inclusivity, and equal opportunities for PwDs.
- ICMR has allocated 3% of its total budget for disability-related activities, focusing on health research and inclusive ecosystems for PwDs.
- These commitments demonstrate ICMR's dedication to creating an inclusive and accessible environment for all individuals, including those with disabilities.

ICMR's Commitment to Inclusion

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) is committed to incorporating these inclusive principles into its premises, ensuring equal access and opportunities for all through accessibility audits, capacity-building workshops, and inclusive infrastructure, ultimately contributing to a barrier-free society where persons with disabilities can live with dignity and participate fully in all aspects of life. Building Inclusive environment ICMR take various steps.

ICMR promotes diversity and inclusion by taking proactive steps to create an accessible and supportive environment.

Capacity Building Initiatives: Awareness programmes

(1) Breaking Barriers: Workshop on Accessibility and Disability Awareness

A sensitization and awareness workshop was conducted on Sept. 24th, 2021 from 11am to 12 pm, to increase awareness among employees of ICMR HQ & Institutions (Tentative Audience: Approximately 2000, ICMR officials participated in the workshop, joining through both online and offline platforms.) about disability and the situation of persons with disabilities at family, community, and workplace levels. Dr. Vidhu Rajput, a mother of a special child herself, delivered a heartfelt and insightful lecture on awareness of disability, legal instruments for persons with disabilities (PWDs), and accessibility. Having personally experienced the challenges of raising a child with disabilities, Dr. Rajput brought a unique perspective to the discussion, highlighting the difficulties faced by families and individuals with disabilities.

According to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), 2006, persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments that hinder their full and effective participation in society. The barriers to participation include attitudinal, environmental, and physical barriers, such as lack of ramps, inaccessible transportation, and inadequate assistive technology. However, by working on these barriers, participation can increase through measures like use of assistive technology, accessibility, and curriculum modifications.

Accessibility refers to the design of products, devices, services, or environments to be usable by people with disabilities, ensuring both direct access and indirect access, meaning compatibility with a person's assistive technology. Article 9 of the UNCRPD states that States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure access to physical environment, transportation, information, and communications. The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) launched the Accessible India Campaign (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan) in 2015 to achieve universal accessibility for PWDs, focusing on built environment, transportation sector, and ICT ecosystem, and aiming to create accessible routes, parking, entrances, reception areas, corridors, lifts, staircases, toilets, and drinking water provisions.

The vision of the Accessible India Campaign is to create a barrier-free environment for independent, safe, and dignified living of PWDs. Key features of this vision include: • accessible and adaptable environments, • accessible transportation systems, • accessible information and communication technologies, and • accessible and inclusive education. The vision statement declares, "Accessible India. Empowered India." Dr. Rajput's personal experience and expertise shed light on the importance of creating an inclusive

society, and her lecture served as a call to action for all participants to work towards a more accessible and equitable environment.

(2) Awareness workshop on Persons with Disabilities and their Rights

Awareness workshop on "Persons with Disabilities and their Rights" was held on 3rd July 2024 from 10:30AM to 12:30 PM. Dr. Hemlata, Additional Director at the National Centre for Disability Studies, IGNOU, conducted the workshop for ICMR employees (Tentative Audience: Approximately 2000 ICMR officials participated in the workshop, joining through both online and offline platforms.). The program aimed to introduce participants to the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, a landmark legislation that aims to promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in India.

Dr. Hemlata deliberated on the paradigm shift from a medical to a social model of disability, which recognizes disability as a natural part of human diversity. She defined disability and its types, highlighting the 21 disabilities recognized by the Act, including locomotor disability, cerebral palsy, dwarfism, muscular dystrophy, acid attack, blindness, low vision, deafness, hard of hearing, speech and language disability, intellectual disability, specific learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, mental illness, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, haemophilia, thalassemia, sickle cell disease, and multiple disabilities.

Dr. Hemlata also discussed the key provisions of the Act, including the rights and entitlements of persons with disabilities, such as equal access to education, employment, healthcare, and transportation. She emphasized the responsibilities of employers and service providers to provide reasonable accommodations and accessible infrastructure to ensure equal opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Prerequisites for Getting Benefits as PwD

The person must either have a disability certificate issued by authorized medical board or have a Unique Disability ID (UDID) issued by the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment (MSJ&E). Disability Certificate can be obtained from the district hospitals/authorized hospitals having medical board by submitting the requisite information. To get the benefit of any scheme or concession of the Government, the person must have a minimum of 40% or more disability (benchmark disability).

Reservation in Admission for Education

As per the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPwD), 2016: Section 31 provides free school education for every child with benchmark disability from age of 6 to 18 years. Section 32 (1) says that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and those receiving grants shall reserve a minimum of 5 per cent seats for persons with benchmark disabilities. There is also a provision of 5 years relaxation in age limit for admission.

Concessions during Examinations

The facility of Scribe/Reader/Lab Assistant should be allowed to any person with benchmark disability. Persons with benchmark disabilities should be given, as far as possible, the option of choosing the mode for taking the examinations, i.e., in Braille or on the computer or in large print or even by recording the answers, as the examining bodies can easily make use of technology to convert the question paper into large print, e-text or Braille and can also convert Braille text in English or regional languages.

Reservation of Jobs

RPwD Act, 2016 under Section 34(1) provides 4% reservation in government jobs for persons with benchmark disabilities as per following break-up:

- Blindness and low vision: 1%
- Deaf and hard of hearing: 1%
- Locomotor disability including cerebral palsy, leprosy-cured, dwarfism, acid attack victims and muscular dystrophy: 1%
- Autism, intellectual disability, specific learning disability and mental illness: 1%
- Multiple disabilities (more than one of the above specified disabilities): 1%

Income Tax Concessions

Under the Income Tax Act of India, persons with disabilities or their family members can avail income tax concessions as per the following sections:

- Section 80 DD: This section provides for a deduction in respect of the expenditure incurred by an individual or Hindu undivided family (HUF) resident in India on the

medical treatment (including nursing), training and rehabilitation etc. of a dependent being a person with disability.

- Section 80U: Under this section, the tax payer (who is a person with disability) herself or himself can avail a rebate of Rs.75,000/- for 40% disability, and Rs.1,25,000/- for 80% and above disability.

Travel Concessions

Air India provides concession of 50% of basic fare of Economy class for persons who are totally blind and those who have 80% or above locomotor disability, which includes cases of paraplegia, hemiplegia, cerebral palsy, severe cases of poliomyelitis, kyphosis, muscular dystrophies, and amputees. The person should have a valid disability certificate.

In conclusion, the workshop on "Breaking Barriers: **Workshop on Persons with Disabilities and their Rights** " was a resounding success, providing valuable insights into the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016. Participants gained a deeper understanding of the rights and entitlements of persons with disabilities, and the importance of accessibility and inclusivity. The workshop aimed to promote a culture of inclusivity and empathy, and to empower participants to become agents of change in promoting the rights of persons with disabilities.

(3) Promoting Health Equity for Persons with Disabilities: A Global Imperative"

Mr. Darryl Barrett, Technical Head (Disability) and Co-Lead of the UNDIS Secretariat at WHO Geneva, presented the groundbreaking "Global Report on Health Equity for Persons with Disabilities". This comprehensive report sheds light on the alarming health disparities faced by over 1 billion people worldwide living with disabilities, highlighting the need for urgent action to address these inequities.

The report reveals that individuals with disabilities are more likely to experience premature death, poorer health outcomes, and are disproportionately affected by health emergencies. These inequities are not solely attributed to underlying health conditions but are also the result of unfair and avoidable factors, such as inaccessible healthcare services, inadequate consideration in emergency planning, and social and environmental barriers.

In response to the World Health Assembly's resolution to achieve the highest attainable standard of health for persons with disabilities, this report aims to raise awareness and mobilize action among governments, civil society organizations, and health sector partners to address these long-standing health inequities. The report emphasizes the importance of inclusive and accessible healthcare systems, and the need for policies and programs that promote health equity and social inclusion.

Through personal testimonies and emphasizing the importance of inclusivity in health sector planning, the report seeks to inspire change and ensure effective health systems strengthening. Ultimately, its objective is to promote health equity and improve the lives of people with disabilities worldwide, enabling them to reach their full potential and participate fully in society.

Following the presentation, ICMR employees posed several queries, which were addressed by the esteemed experts. Mr. Jitesh Kumar, Scientist 'D' at KIHT, AMTZ, who uses a wheelchair, shared his personal experiences, adding a relatable dimension to the conversation. His testimony served as a poignant reminder of the importance of inclusivity and accessibility in healthcare, and the need for greater awareness and understanding of the challenges faced by persons with disabilities.

The presentation and subsequent discussion highlighted the urgent need for collective action to address the health inequities faced by persons with disabilities. By working together, we can promote health equity, improve lives, and create a more inclusive and accessible world for all, where everyone has the opportunity to reach their full potential and live a healthy and fulfilling life.

(4) Awareness Workshop on "Accessibility and Inclusion: Need of the Hour"

The workshop on "Accessibility and Inclusion: Need of the Hour" was conducted on October 4, 2024, at the ICMR Headquarters, New Delhi. Dr. Navjeet Gaurav, Assistant Professor, Department of Architecture and Planning, IIT Roorkee, delivered a comprehensive and engaging lecture on accessibility and inclusion, highlighting the importance of universal design principles in creating inclusive and accessible environments. He emphasized that accessibility is not just about physical access, but also about social and economic access, and that it is essential for promoting equality, dignity, and human rights.

A pre-workshop questionnaire was administered to the participants to assess their knowledge and attitudes towards accessibility and inclusion. The questionnaire consisted of 10 questions and was designed to evaluate the participants' understanding of accessibility and inclusion, their attitudes towards people with disabilities, and their knowledge of universal design principles. A post-workshop questionnaire was also administered to assess the impact of the workshop on the participants' knowledge and attitudes.

The post-workshop questionnaire revealed a significant increase in the participants' knowledge and understanding of accessibility and inclusion. The results showed that 90% of the participants reported an increase in their knowledge of universal design principles, 85% reported a change in their attitudes towards people with disabilities, and 80% reported an increase in their understanding of the importance of accessibility and inclusion. The workshop had a positive impact on the ICMR employees, who reported feeling more confident and empowered to promote accessibility and inclusion in their work.

The workshop emphasized the importance of accessibility and inclusion in creating a barrier-free environment and provided practical recommendations for promoting inclusive design and accessibility. The recommendations included incorporating universal design principles into design practices, conducting accessibility audits of public buildings and spaces, promoting inclusive design and accessibility in education and training programs, and supporting policies and legislation that promote accessibility and inclusion.

Initiating Universal Design Principles:

To initiate universal design principles, the following steps can be taken:

- Initiate discussion and awareness about universal design principles
- Conduct training and workshops on inclusive design and accessibility
- Hold department discussions and meetings to promote inclusive design and accessibility
- Involve people with lived experiences in the design process
- Conduct access audits to identify barriers and develop strategies for removal

Steps of Access Audit:

The steps of access audit include:

- Identifying barriers in physical environments
- Assessing the accessibility of buildings, transportation systems, and public spaces
- Developing strategies for removing barriers and promoting accessibility
- Implementing accessibility features and monitoring progress

Need for a Participatory Approach:

A participatory approach is essential for promoting accessibility and inclusion. This involves:

- Involving people with disabilities and lived experiences in the design process
- Conducting accessibility audits and assessments
- Developing strategies for promoting accessibility and inclusion
- Implementing accessibility features and monitoring progress

Why Don't We Do What We Know?

Despite the importance of accessibility and inclusion, many barriers still exist. To address this, it is essential to:

- Raise awareness about the importance of accessibility and inclusion
- Provide training and education on inclusive design and accessibility
- Promote policies and legislation that support accessibility and inclusion
- Involve people with lived experiences in the design process

Approximately 2000 officials participated in this workshop, which promises to be an enriching and enlightening experience. The event will be video-linked to all ICMR institutes, allowing for maximum participation. Dr. Gaurav's invaluable expertise and insights will significantly enhance our officials' understanding of accessibility, promoting inclusive environments, empowering persons with disabilities, and fostering a culture of inclusivity.

Appointment of Nodal Officers

As per the recommendations of the ICMR Expert Group, each institute was required to appoint a Nodal Officer to oversee the creation of an accessible environment for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs). Institutes were requested to nominate a suitable officer as Nodal Officer by 25th May.2024. The appointed Nodal Officers underwent training to understand accessible environments and conduct an accessibility audit of their respective institutes. Additionally, they were responsible for sensitizing institute staff on issues related to PwDs.

Training of Nodal officers

Accessibility Audit and Sensitization Training Workshop for ICMR Nodal Officers

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) organized a comprehensive training workshop on Accessibility Audit and Sensitization for Nodal Officers from ICMR Headquarters and institutions across India. The workshop took place from July 25-27, 2024, at the Andhra Pradesh MedTech Zone (AMTZ), Visakhapatnam. A total of 45 Participants attended the workshop (the list of Expert Group members, Nodal Officers, and ICMR Secretariat personnel

Inaugural Session

Welcome and Introduction

On behalf of the Director General, ICMR, Dr. Ravinder Singh (Scientist D) welcomed the expert members and Nodal Officers to the Accessibility Audit and Sensitization Training Workshop. He gave a comprehensive background on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPWD) 2016, emphasizing the importance of inclusive growth in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and India's global leadership.

Dr. Singh highlighted the RPWD Act's vision for universal accessibility, encompassing accessible websites, buildings, roads, and habitats. He stressed the need for non-discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) and the responsibility of families, communities, and governments in providing equal opportunities.

He emphasized the imperative of implementing the RPWD Act 2016 in its true spirit, ensuring accessibility in built environments, transport systems, and ICT platforms. Dr. Singh mentioned the Sugamya Bharat App, which enables users to report inaccessible buildings, and urged institutions to comply with the Act to avoid legal action.

Context and Objectives of the Training Workshop

The accessibility workshop commenced with an introduction session, where Dr. R. Lakshminarayanan, DDG (Admn.) ICMR, joined via video conference. He highlighted the need for the workshop, emphasizing its tri-fold objective: raising awareness, understanding standards, and pinpointing barriers that hinder full participation of individuals with disabilities. By doing so, he adeptly set the stage for the workshop's goals, which include cultivating inclusive skills, promoting design inclusivity, and fostering a culture of accessibility within ICMR institutions, thereby providing a comprehensive overview of the current accessibility landscape.

He informed that the Training Workshop on Accessibility was convened by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) in recognition of the urgent need to establish inclusive environments and practices within its institutions. In alignment with the increasing acknowledgement of the rights and valuable contributions of individuals with disabilities, this workshop aimed to empower participants with the requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes to facilitate barrier-free access to healthcare, education, and employment opportunities.

Through the promotion of a culture of accessibility, this initiative sought to advance equal opportunities, social justice, and human rights, ultimately enhancing the overall quality of life for individuals with disabilities and enriching the diversity of ICMR's workforce and communities.

Introducing the Purple Tag Building Concept

Dr. Jitendra Sharma (DirectorAMTZ, Vishakhapatnam) introduced the Purple Tag Building concept, a novel initiative aimed at setting accessibility and inclusivity standards for buildings, similar to the Green Tag certification. The Purple Tag Scheme will be developed by a team of experts comprising a Steering Committee, Technical Committee, and Certification Committee. The scheme's objectives include establishing clear accessibility benchmarks, ensuring compliance with the National Building Code (NBC) and relevant standards, promoting best practices, and providing a framework for regular audits. The Steering Committee consists of members from various organizations, including AMTZ (2), ICMR (2), Builders Association (2), Construction Association (8), and expert members (4). This collaborative effort aims to make buildings more accessible and inclusive for all.

Formulating the Purple Tag Scheme: A Technical Perspective

Dr. Mrutunjay Jena delivered an in-depth session on the formulation of the Purple Tag Scheme, detailing its technical components and development process. He outlined the establishment of the Steering and Technical Committees, and emphasized the crucial technical aspects that must be considered to ensure comprehensive accessibility standards are met. Dr. Jena's session provided valuable insights into the scheme's development, covering key steps and considerations to create a robust and effective framework for accessibility in buildings.

Module 1:

Understanding Disabilities

Dr. Hemlata, Additional Director, National Centre for Disability Studies (NCDS), Indira Gandhi National Open University, led the first session, bringing her extensive experience in designing awareness programs and conducting research on disabilities.

Dr. Hemlata defined disability as a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that encompasses physical, sensory, cognitive, and mental health impairments, which can impact an individual's ability to participate fully in society. She emphasized that disability is not solely the result of an individual's impairment, but rather the intersection of that impairment with environmental, social, and attitudinal barriers that prevent full inclusion. Her definition highlights the dynamic interplay between the individual and their context, underscoring the need for a holistic and inclusive approach to understanding and addressing disability, and promoting equal opportunities and human rights for all individuals, regardless of their abilities.

Disability Awareness

Mr. Bhupinder Singh explained that understanding disability entails recognizing it as a natural aspect of human diversity, rather than viewing it as a defect or limitation. Disability can manifest in various forms, including physical, sensory, cognitive, and mental health conditions, and can affect anyone at any stage of life. It is crucial to approach disability from a social model perspective, which highlights that barriers and exclusions are created by societal attitudes, environments, and structures, rather than by the individual's impairment itself. By adopting this understanding, we can work to eliminate barriers, promote inclusivity, and empower individuals with disabilities to reach

their full potential, thereby fostering a culture of acceptance, respect, and equal opportunities

Self-Assessment

According to Bhupinder Singh, self-assessment regarding accessibility is a reflective process where individuals or organizations evaluate their own environments, policies, and practices to identify barriers and gaps that may hinder accessibility for people with disabilities. This introspective approach enables individuals and organizations to recognize their strengths and weaknesses, set realistic goals, and develop strategies to improve accessibility and inclusivity. By conducting regular self-assessments, individuals and organizations can foster a culture of continuous improvement, ensure compliance with accessibility standards, and create a more inclusive and equitable environment for everyone

Module 2:

Persons with Disability and their Entitlements

DrHemlataexplained all the 21 disabilities with suitable examples and discussed the symptoms of all these disabilities. She distributed a handout having a brief of each disability and symptoms of these disabilities, rights and entitlement of persons with disabilities, terminologies to be used for persons with disabilities and tips for better interaction with them (**Annexure II**).

She discussed the Rights and entitlements of persons with Disabilities. Persons with disabilities deserve equal opportunities and access to education, employment, and healthcare. They have the right to dignity, respect, and protection from harm. By providing support and resources, we can empower them to thrive and reach their full potential. She urged all to create a world where everyone can shine, regardless of their abilities. The following topics of related to rights and entitlements' were discussed at length:

- Equality and Non-Discrimination
- Accessibility
- Education
- Employment
- Healthcare
- Social Security
- Legal Protection
- Disability Certificate

- Reservation Quota
- Scholarships
- Assistive Devices
- Concessions
- Pension and Insurance
- Rehabilitation

Terminologies to be used for addressing PwDs

Using appropriate language when interacting with persons with disabilities is crucial to show respect and inclusivity. Person-first language should be used, prioritizing the individual over their disability. Referring to someone as "a person with a disability" instead of "disabled person" makes a significant difference. This subtle change in language helps to emphasize the person's identity and worth, rather than defining them solely by their disability. Inappropriate language, on the other hand, can lead to feelings of humiliation, exclusion, and create barriers to full participation. To promote an inclusive society, it's essential to use respectful terminologies, avoiding words that perpetuate negative stereotypes and stigma. For instance, instead of saying "wheelchair-bound," say "person who uses a wheelchair"; replace "mentally retarded" with "person with an intellectual disability"; and use "deaf or hard of hearing" instead of "hearing impaired." By adopting inclusive language, we can foster a culture of respect, dignity, and equal opportunities for all individuals, and work towards creating a society that values diversity and promotes inclusivity.

How to Interact with Persons with Disabilities

- She gave some tips for interacting effectively with persons with disabilities and facilitating them i.e. greeting them appropriately, making them comfortable by asking for sitting, listening to them carefully and having patience while interacting with them as it may be difficult for them to understand things quickly because of hearing loss.

Modules 3

Current Laws on Accessibility in India

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

- Dr Hemlata discussed the main sections of UNCRPD and the key points of United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).She

informed that the purpose of UNCRPD is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all humanrights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity. The uniqueness of this convention is that it is a Both a development and a human rights instrument, a policy instrument which is cross-disability and cross-sectorial and it is llegaly binding. She further added that The Convention marks a 'paradigm shift' in attitudes and approaches to persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities are not viewed as "objects" of charity, medical treatment and social protection; rather as "subjects" with rights, who are capable of claiming those rights and making decisions for their lives based on their free and informed consent as well as being active members of society. The Convention gives universal recognition to the dignity of persons with disabilities. (Power Point Presentation on UNCRPD **Annexure III**)

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016

She informed thatthe current Act on accessibility in India is the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016. This Act has replaced the Persons with Disability Act, 1995, and is in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. RPwD Act 2016 is a comprehensive law that aims to protect and promote the rights of individuals with disabilities in India. It recognizes 21 disabilities, including physical, mental, and intellectual disabilities, and provides for accessibility, education, employment, healthcare, social security, and recreation. The Act also establishes a grievance redressal mechanism and penalties for offenses. Its goal is to create an inclusive society where persons with disabilities can live with dignity and equality.

She has elaborated following key points about the RPwD Act 2016:

- Definition of Disability: The RPwD Act recognizes 21 disabilities, including physical, mental, and intellectual disabilities.
- Accessibility: The Act mandates accessibility in physical environment, transportation, information, and communication.
- Education: The Act provides for inclusive education, with provisions for free education, scholarships, and reservation of seats in government institutions.
- Employment: The Act provides for reservation of jobs in government establishments and incentives for private companies to employ persons with disabilities ¹.

- Healthcare: The Act provides for free healthcare, priority attendance, and treatment, as well as schemes to promote healthcare and prevent disabilities.
- Recreation and Cultural Life: The Act provides for recreational activities and cultural life, including access to arts and culture.

Key Provisions

- Data Collection: The Act mandates data collection on persons with disabilities.
- Grievance Redressal: The Act provides for grievance redressal mechanisms, including the appointment of a chief commissioner and state commissioners.
- Penalties: The Act specifies penalties for offenses, including fines and imprisonment.

Status of Implementation

- Progress: The implementation of the Act has been slow, with low budgetary allocations and lack of sensitization among government officials.
- Challenges: Despite the Act, persons with disabilities still face challenges in accessing government schemes, employment, and healthcare

Harmonised Guidelines & Standards for Universal Accessibility in India 2021

Mr. Bhupinder Singh's presentation showcased the key features of the Harmonised Guidelines and Standards for Universal Accessibility in India 2021 through a series of visuals and diagrams. He highlighted the importance of universal accessibility in creating an inclusive environment for all, regardless of age, size, or ability. The presentation covered the guidelines' focus on accessible infrastructure, transportation, information, and communication, including standards for ramps, elevators, toilets, and signage. Mr. Singh also emphasized the role of technology in enhancing accessibility, such as audio signals at pedestrian crossings and Braille signage. Through his presentation, Mr. Singh effectively communicated the need for a universal accessibility framework in India, emphasizing its benefits for persons with disabilities, elderly individuals, and the broader population.

Module 4:

Accessibility & Inclusion by Mr. Bhupinder Singh

What is Accessibility

According to Bhupinder Singh, accessibility refers to the design and implementation of products, services, and environments that can be used by everyone, regardless of their abilities or disabilities. It involves creating inclusive and barrier-free access to:

- Physical spaces (ramps, elevators, accessible restrooms)
- Information and communication (Braille, audio descriptions, sign language)
- Technology (assistive technologies, screen readers, keyboard-only navigation)
- Transportation (accessible vehicles, pedestrian infrastructure)
- Education and employment (inclusive learning materials, accommodations, and opportunities)
- He emphasizes that accessibility is not just about physical access but also about ensuring equal opportunities and participation for all individuals, including those with disabilities. It requires a proactive and inclusive approach to design, policy, and practice.

Principles of Inclusion Mr. Bhupinder Singh informed that the principles of inclusion are:

1. Zero Rejection: Ensuring no one is excluded or rejected.
2. Acceptance: Embracing diversity and promoting equal opportunities.
3. Accessibility: Ensuring physical, social, and economic access for all.
4. Participation: Encouraging active involvement and engagement from all individuals.
5. Non-discrimination: Prohibiting discrimination based on age, gender, disability, or other characteristics.
6. Empowerment: Fostering autonomy, self-advocacy, and self-determination.
7. Support: Providing necessary accommodations and resources for inclusive participation.
8. Sensitivity: Promoting awareness and understanding of diverse needs and experiences.
9. Flexibility: Adapting to individual needs and circumstances.
10. Collaboration: Working together to create inclusive environments and communities.

These principles, as outlined by Bhupinder Singh, aim to promote a culture of inclusion, where everyone has the opportunity to participate and contribute.

Assistive Technology and Devices by Dr. Nekram Upadhyay

Unlocking Potential: The Power of Assistive Technology

Dr. Nekram Upadhyay led a pivotal session, "Unlocking Potential: The Power of Assistive Technology," emphasizing the transformative impact of Assistive Technology (AT) on individuals with disabilities. By understanding the needs of others through the Human Activity & Assistive Technology (HAAT) Model, we can create a more inclusive world.

Key Takeaways:

- Assistive Technology empowers individuals to break free from limitations and unlock their full potential.
- The HAAT Model considers the individual, their activities, and required assistive technology to create a more inclusive world.
- The GATE initiative aims to make high-quality assistive products accessible to everyone, everywhere, focusing on five key areas: people, policy, products, provision, and personnel.
- Providing access to assistive technology can unlock employment opportunities, open doors to education, foster independence, and build stronger communities.

Data on disability

- 15% of the global population lives with a disability (WHO, 2011).
- In India, 2.68 Cr persons are disabled, accounting for 2.21% of the total population (Census 2011).
- 2.4% of males and 1.9% of females have disabilities (National Sample Survey 2018).

Wheelchair Accessibility: A Basic Human Right

He informed that proper assessments and tailored solutions can ensure that everyone can navigate their world with confidence and ease. He demonstrated various techniques for using the wheelchair in different situations.

Accessible transportation (Automated solution or improving accessibility for all by Mr. Jagjit Singh (JS Motors))

Mr. Jagjit Singh, an expert in accessible transportation, highlights the crucial need for ramps in vehicles to facilitate easy access for wheelchair users. He emphasizes that ramps are essential for ensuring independence, safety, and dignity for individuals with mobility impairments.

He informed that the need for Ramps is for the following reasons:

Accessibility: Ramps provide a gentle slope for wheelchair users to enter and exit vehicles, eliminating the need for lifting or manual handling.

Independence: Self-driven vehicles with ramps empower wheelchair users to travel independently, without relying on others for assistance.

Safety: Ramps reduce the risk of accidents and injuries associated with manual handling or lifting.

Dignity: Ramps promote dignity and self-respect for wheelchair users, allowing them to maintain their autonomy and confidence.

Modification of Vehicles with Folding Ramps:

Mr. Jagjit Singh's work focuses on modifying vehicles to incorporate folding ramps, enabling wheelchair users to:

1. **Self-Drive:** Operate vehicles independently, using folding ramps to enter and exit the vehicle.
2. **Transport:** Transport persons with disabilities safely and comfortably, with easy access in and out of the vehicle.

Key Features of Folding Ramps:

Compact Design: Folding ramps are designed to be compact, allowing for easy storage and deployment.

Lightweight Materials: Ramps are made from lightweight materials, ensuring easy handling and minimizing vehicle weight.

Durable Construction: Ramps are built to withstand regular use, with a durable and rust-resistant finish.

Easy Operation: Ramps are designed for simple and effortless operation, with minimal manual effort required.

Benefits of Modified Vehicles with Folding Ramps

Enhanced Mobility: Increased independence and mobility for wheelchair users.

Improved Safety: Reduced risk of accidents and injuries.

Increased Accessibility: Easy access to vehicles, enabling wheelchair users to participate fully in daily activities.

Enhanced Quality of Life: Improved overall quality of life, with increased autonomy and confidence.

Mr. Jagjit Singh's work demonstrates the importance of accessible transportation solutions, highlighting the need for ramps in vehicles to promote independence, safety, and dignity for wheelchair users.

Module 5:

Universal Design Principals by Mr. Bhupinder Singh

Mr. Bhupinder Singh outlined the Universal Design Principles as following:

Principle 1: Equitable Use

- Design should be accessible and usable by everyone, regardless of age, size, ability, or disability.
- Avoid segregating or stigmatizing any user group.

Principle 2: Flexibility in Use

- Design should accommodate different user needs and preferences.
- Provide choices for users to interact with the environment or product.

Principle 3: Perceptible Information

- Communicate information in a clear, concise, and accessible manner.
- Use multiple formats (visual, auditory, tactile) to reach diverse users.

Principle 4: Tolerance for Error

- Design should minimize hazards and errors.
- Anticipate user mistakes and provide feedback or warnings.

Principle 5: Low Physical Effort

- Design should minimize physical effort required to use the environment or product.

- Provide ergonomic and comfortable interactions.

Principle 6: **Size and Space for Approach and Use**

- Design should accommodate users of various sizes and abilities.
- Provide sufficient space for approach, use, and maneuverability.

Principle 7: **Perceptible and Understandable Elements**

- Ensure all elements are perceivable and understandable by users.
- Use clear and consistent language, symbols, and icons.

Principle 8: **Minimal Cognitive Load**

- Design should minimize cognitive effort required to use the environment or product.
- Provide intuitive and simple interactions.

Principle 9: **Intuitive Use**

- Design should be intuitive and easy to understand.
- Use familiar concepts and consistent design patterns.

Principle 10: **Feedback**

- Provide timely and effective feedback to users.
- Inform users about their actions and the results.

By applying these Universal Design Principles, designers and architects can create inclusive and accessible environments, products, and services that benefit everyone, regardless of their abilities or disabilities.

Summing up of Day 1

Day1 concluded with thanks to all the experts and the participants for active participation in Accessibility Workshop. The feedback of the participants was that the experts covered all the relevant topics related to accessibility at length. It has given the insights to them to deal with the issues related to disabilities in more professional manner. This initiative of ICMR will go a long way in providing accessibility and explored the Universal Design Principles in its institutions across the country. Accessibility is not about just compliance but it is about creating a more inclusive environment for everyone. The learning of this session will enable the participants to apply it in their work and daily life. They will be able to break down barriers and create a more accessible world for all

They all were looking forward to next day to be another informative day.

Accessibility Audit and Sensitization Training Workshop for ICMR Nodal Officers

Day 2

Module 6:

Accessibility and Challenges in Bureaucratic Work Environment by IRS Deputy Commissioner Nilesh Kumar Keshari:

Nilesh Kumar Keshari discussed the accessibility and challenges in a bureaucratic work environment, highlighting the need for inclusive policies and practices to ensure equal opportunities for all employees. He emphasized that despite existing guidelines and regulations, accessibility remains a significant challenge in government offices, with physical barriers, inadequate technology, and attitudinal biases hindering the participation of persons with disabilities. Mr. Keshari stressed that a bureaucratic work environment must strive to remove these barriers, providing reasonable accommodations, accessible infrastructure, and sensitive communication to foster a culture of inclusivity. He also underscored the importance of training and sensitization programs to raise awareness among employees, promoting a disability-inclusive workplace that values diversity and promotes equal opportunities for growth and development. Furthermore, he suggested that the Purple Tag Scheme can play a crucial role in bridging the gaps in accessibility standards, encouraging government offices to adopt and implement inclusive practices, and ensuring that the bureaucratic work environment is accessible, inclusive, and empowering for all employees.

Key Challenges

The following key challenges being faced by persons with disabilities were discussed by Mr. Nilesh:

- Inaccessible Physical Infrastructure: Lack of ramps, elevators, and adapted toilets
- Insufficient Assistive Technology: Limited access to screen readers, braille displays, and other assistive tools
- Limited Job Accommodations: Inadequate flexible work arrangements and modified duties
- Attitudinal Barriers: Stigma, bias, and stereotyping
- Inadequate Training and Support: Lack of training and support to address attitudinal barriers
- Inaccessible Communication: Limited access to sign language interpreters and braille materials

- Limited Opportunities for Career Advancement: Limited opportunities for growth and development
- Social Isolation: Exclusion from team-building activities and social events

Recommendations

- He recommended the following measures for realization of accessibility:
- Strengthen Enforcement of Accessibility Policies
- Implement the Purple Tag Scheme
- Provide Accessible Physical Infrastructure
- Offer Assistive Technology and Job Accommodations
- Provide Training and Support to Address Attitudinal Barriers
- Ensure Accessible Communication
- Foster a Culture of Inclusivity and Support

In conclusion creating an inclusive bureaucratic work environment necessitates a multifaceted approach that tackles physical, technological, and attitudinal barriers faced by disabled officers. By implementing these recommendations, we can promote equal opportunities, foster a culture of inclusivity, and unlock the full potential of our workforce. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that our work environment is accessible, equitable, and empowering for all employees, regardless of their abilities. Notably, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) deserves acclaim for its exemplary commitment to fostering an inclusive and accessible work environment, with initiatives promoting diversity and equity, particularly for employees with disabilities. The proactive measures undertaken by ICMR to address the challenges faced by officers having disabilities and their families demonstrate its dedication to creating a barrier-free workplace, I extend my sincerest appreciation to the leadership and team of ICMR for their tireless efforts in building a more inclusive and supportive work environment, and I urge us all to work together to build a more inclusive and supportive workplace that values diversity and promotes growth and development for all.

Simulation exercise by Mr. Jitesh kumar and Vinay Kumar Consultant. (NHSRC):

Simulation Exercise: Walking in the Shoes of others. The simulation exercise, conducted with an aim to build empathy and sensitize participants towards individuals with locomotor, visual, speech, and hearing disabilities. Through this immersive experience, participants gained a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities, including:

- Physical barriers: navigating a mock office setup with obstacles and challenges while experiencing an assigned disability
- Attitudinal barriers: understanding the impact of stigma, bias, and stereotypes on individuals with disabilities



- Accessibility: recognizing the importance of accommodations, support, and inclusive design in creating an equitable environment. The exercise culminated in a commitment from participants to drive positive change and create a more inclusive work environment, with recommendations including:

- Implementing accessibility measures
 - Providing accommodations and support
 - Conducting regular sensitization and training programs
 - Fostering a culture of inclusivity and respect

By experiencing disabilities firsthand, participants gained valuable insights and pledged to promote inclusivity, diversity, and equal opportunities in the workplace.







Module7:

Access Audit Checklist for Inclusive Spaces

Mr. Bhupinder Singh led this session, focusing on the Access Audit Checklist, a crucial tool for creating inclusive environments. This comprehensive checklist enables Nodal Officers to conduct thorough examinations of institutional premises, identifying physical barriers and opportunities for improvement. Checklist at Annexure

Key Components of the Access Audit Checklist:

1. Site location and approach road
2. Signage and way finding
3. Parking
4. Entrance
5. Information counter/reception area
6. Circulation within the building and flooring
7. Door handles
8. Stairs and handrails
9. Lift
10. Restroom/toilet
11. Canteen and eating area
12. Conference hall/board room
13. Billing counter
14. Emergency and evacuations
15. Transportation
16. Information and communications technology
17. Web accessibility

Evaluation Criteria:

The checklist assesses the presence and adequacy of features such as:

- Directional signage
- Accessible parking
- Drop-off zones
- Step-free entrances
- Handrails
- Tactile guidance
- Accessible building layout plans

- Lever-type door handles
- Automatic door openers
- Consistent step height and depth
- Color contrast
- Wide corridors
- Non-glary flooring
- Resting areas
- Wheelchair-accessible toilets
- Grab bars
- Emergency alarms
- Accessible tables
- Clear knee space
- Varied menus
- Accessible stages
- Dedicated accessible seating
- Hearing enhancement systems
- Accessible billing counters
- Clearly marked emergency exits
- Emergency alarms
- Evacuation chairs
- Accessible shuttle services
- Designated accessible transportation coordinators
- Accessible digital platforms
- Assistive technologies
- Accessible software applications
- Web accessibility features (perceivable content, operable navigation, understandable content, and robust compatibility)

Objective:

The Access Audit Checklist is a vital tool for creating inclusive spaces. Nodal officers may use it to conduct a thorough examination of institutional premises, identifying physical barriers and opportunities for improvement. By documenting their findings and prioritizing changes, they develop a clear plan to enhance accessibility, working collaboratively to break down barriers and build a more welcoming environment for all.

The second day of the workshop featured a comprehensive, hands-on training program designed to equip participants with practical skills and knowledge to conduct thorough accessibility audits and identify barriers in various physical and digital environments. The workshop commenced with an introduction to accessibility audits,

covering the significance of inclusive design, the importance of accessibility in today's society, and the crucial role of audits in creating barrier-free, inclusive spaces. Participants then engaged in immersive, hands-on training sessions, assessing physical environments such as ramps, doors, corridors, and bathrooms, with objectives to identify and document accessibility barriers and suggest feasible, effective modifications. The training methodology included interactive practical exercises, group discussions, and real-life case studies, leading to learning outcomes that enabled participants to conduct mock accessibility audits, compile comprehensive reports, and communicate findings and recommendations effectively to stakeholders.

Conclusion

The hands-on training program empowered participants with practical skills and knowledge to conduct accessibility audits, identify barriers, and suggest modifications, ultimately contributing to creating inclusive environments that promote equal access for all.

Session Two Speaker of the session: Mr. Jagjit Singh presented valuable insights on the necessity of ramps for vehicles, highlighting the importance of accessibility features for individuals with mobility impairments. He shared his extensive work and expertise in modifying vehicles to incorporate folding ramps, which enable easy access and exit for wheelchair users. Through his innovative designs and modifications, Mr. Singh has made significant contributions to enhancing the mobility and independence of individuals with disabilities, demonstrating his commitment to promoting inclusivity and accessibility in transportation solutions. His work serves as a testament to the impact of innovative thinking and design in improving the lives of individuals with disabilities. By providing accessible transportation options, Mr. Singh's modifications have opened up new possibilities for social participation, education, and employment, ultimately contributing to a more equitable and inclusive society. His dedication to this critical aspect of accessibility has set a high standard for the industry, inspiring others to follow in his footsteps and strive for excellence in inclusive design.

Practical Session: Conducting an Accessibility Audit

The practical session of the accessibility audit training workshop was a hands-on, immersive experience where participants applied their knowledge in a real-world setting. Divided into small groups, participants conducted accessibility audits of assigned physical or digital environments, including building entrances, websites, and mobile apps.

Physical Environment Audit

Groups auditing physical environments utilized accessibility checklists and measuring tools to assess entrance ramps, doors, corridors, and bathrooms. They identified barriers and documented findings, measuring ramp inclines, door widths, and clearance spaces, and evaluating signage, lighting, and emergency evacuation procedures.

Digital Environment Audit

Groups auditing digital environments employed specialized software and tools to evaluate websites, mobile apps, or digital documents. They assessed color contrast, font sizes, navigation, and multimedia accessibility, identifying barriers and suggesting modifications to ensure equal access.

Group Discussions and Feedback

Following the audits, groups reconvened to share findings and discuss challenges. Participants received feedback from trainers and peers, gaining insights into best practices and effective strategies for conducting accessibility audits.

Takeaways

Through this practical session, participants gained hands-on experience in conducting accessibility audits, developing essential skills to:

- Identify barriers in physical and digital environments
- Document findings and suggest modifications
- Communicate effectively with stakeholders
- Integrate accessibility into their work practices
- By applying theoretical knowledge in a real-world setting, participants left the workshop empowered to create inclusive, accessible environments. Ultimately, they acquired the expertise, confidence, and resources necessary to promote accessibility in their respective fields, enhancing the quality of life for individuals with disabilities.

By the end of the workshop, participants are empowered with the expertise, confidence, and resources necessary to create inclusive, accessible environments and promote accessibility in their respective fields, ultimately enhancing the quality of life for individuals with disabilities.

Conclusion

As we conclude this Accessibility Training Workshop, we are confident that participants have acquired valuable knowledge, skills, and insights to create inclusive environments that empower individuals of all abilities. We emphasize that accessibility extends beyond legal requirements, representing a fundamental human right. We urge participants to apply their newfound expertise in their daily work, fostering a ripple effect of inclusivity that positively impacts lives. Together, we can dismantle barriers and build a world where everyone can participate, contribute, and thrive, unlocking the full potential of individuals with disabilities and creating a more inclusive, equitable world for all.

Two-Day Capsule Course on Accessibility in Buildings and Built Environment at Bureau of Indian Standards (NITS, Noida): for ICMR Nominated Nodal Officers

Empowering inclusivity and accessibility, the Two-Day Capsule Course on National Building Code of India 2016 - Accessibility in Buildings and Built Environment, held during **11-12 November 2024**, at NITS, Noida, enlightened professionals and homeowners on universal design principles. This comprehensive training delved into the 115+ pages of accessibility provisions in NBC2016, illustrated by 100+ figures, ensuring better implementation at the local level. By promoting barrier-free design, the course helped create safer, more comfortable, and convenient built environments, benefiting everyone, including those with temporary impairments or needing assistance. The event enhanced participants' expertise and contributed to a more inclusive and compliant society.

Day 1 Introduction: Accessibility and Govt. of India Campaign

Shri Subhash Chandra Vashishth, Director of the Centre for Accessibility in Built Environment Foundation, emphasized the importance of accessibility and the Government of India's campaign to raise awareness on this critical issue. He highlighted the need to understand diverse access needs, recognizing that individuals had varying requirements for inclusivity. Additionally, he stressed the importance of addressing attitudinal and physical barriers that hindered accessibility, promoting a shift in mindset and infrastructure. Furthermore, he discussed the significance of disability etiquettes and language, encouraging respectful communication and interaction with individuals with disabilities, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and accessible environment.

Access for All – Legal and Policy Framework

Shri T.D. Dhariyal, former Executive Director of the Centre for Accessibility in Built Environment Foundation, Dy. Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities, Government of India, and State Commissioner for PwDs, Delhi, comprehensively outlined the legal and policy framework for "Access for All". He delineated the foundational provisions of the Constitution of India, the landmark legal provision through Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016, and the National Policy, highlighting their collective significance in promoting inclusivity. Furthermore, he elaborated on India's commitment to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, (UNCRPD) underscoring the nation's dedication to upholding the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. Through his expertise, Shri Dhariyal underscored the robust framework established to ensure accessibility and equal opportunities for all.

Introduction to BIS(Bureau of Indian Standards)National Building Code of India 2016, Applicability, Scope, Terminology

Shri Subhash Chandra Vashishth, delivered an insightful introduction to the National Building Code of India 2016, elucidating its applicability, scope, and terminology with a focus on Universal Design. He expounded on the concept of Universal Design, highlighting its significance in creating inclusive environments that cater to diverse user needs. Shri Vashishth also explored the impact of various disabilities on architecture and design, delving into anthropometrics and the importance of understanding user perspectives. Furthermore, he identified common barriers and presented space standards that prioritize accessibility, ensuring that built environments are navigable and usable by all. Through his expertise, Shri Vashishth provided a comprehensive understanding of the National Building Code's provisions for creating inclusive and accessible spaces.

Accessible Parking, Approach to the building & Building Entrances

Shri Subhash Chandra Vashishth, presented a detailed overview of accessible parking and building entrance design. He outlined the essential specifications for accessible parking, including designated spaces and signage. Shri Vashishth also discussed the importance of designing drop-off points, approach routes to buildings, and entrances that facilitate easy access. He elaborated on the critical design elements of pathways and access aisles, ensuring seamless navigation. Furthermore, he highlighted key considerations for entrance doors and hardware, including width, thresholds, and user-friendly handles. By sharing his expertise, Shri Vashishth equipped participants with the

knowledge to create barrier-free access points, enabling individuals with disabilities to navigate buildings with ease and independence.

Internal Circulation – Universal Design Considerations

SmtMadhurimaMadhav, Scientist 'E' and Director (Civil Engineering) at the Bureau of Indian Standards, presented a comprehensive overview of internal circulation and universal design considerations. She discussed the importance of accessible reception counters, circulation spaces, and flooring, highlighting the need for seamless navigation. SmtMadhav also addressed level changes and vertical circulation, elaborating on the design of stairs and ramps, including handrail specifications. Additionally, she emphasized the crucial design considerations for access elevators/lifts, Lifts should have a minimum size of 1.5m x 2m, 90cm wide doors, and control panels at 0.9-1.2m height with tactile markings and Braille signage. Additional features include mirrors, handrails, non-slip flooring, and two-way communication systems to ensure accessibility and safety for all users, including people with disabilities. Ensuring equitable access to all building occupants. By sharing her expertise, SmtMadhav provided valuable insights into creating inclusive and barrier-free internal circulation systems, promoting independence and safety for individuals with disabilities.

Sanitary Facilities

Shri Subhash Chandra Vashishth, presented a detailed examination of sanitary facilities, prioritizing inclusivity and accessibility. He outlined the essential design considerations for unisex toilets, ensuring equitable access for all users. Shri Vashishth also discussed the specific needs of ambulant disabled and wheelchair users, highlighting the importance of adaptable urinals and toilets. Furthermore, he addressed the design requirements for bathrooms and changing rooms, emphasizing the need for safety, privacy, and comfort. By sharing his expertise, Shri Vashishth provided valuable insights into creating sanitary facilities that cater to diverse user needs, promoting dignity and independence for individuals with disabilities.

TGSIs- Way Finding and TGSIs

Shri Subhash Chandra Vashishth, highlighted the significance of Tactile Ground Surface Indicators (TGSIs) and universal signage in facilitating wayfinding for diverse users. He emphasized the importance of standardized signage, encompassing visual, auditory, and tactile elements, to ensure seamless navigation. Shri Vashishth elaborated on the various types of TGSIs and signage, including raised letters, Braille, and pictograms, and

discussed their standard specifications. By sharing his expertise, he underscored the crucial role of inclusive signage in creating accessible and user-friendly environments, enabling individuals with visual impairments and other disabilities to navigate independently and confidently.

Retrofitting in Existing Buildings

Shri Subhash Chandra Vashishth, presented a comprehensive approach to retrofitting existing buildings for accessibility. He highlighted the challenges and opportunities in modifying existing structures to meet universal design standards. Shri Vashishth outlined practical strategies for retrofitting, including assessing existing barriers, prioritizing modifications, and implementing cost-effective solutions. He emphasized the importance of minimizing disruptions while maximizing accessibility features, such as ramps, lifts, and adaptable restrooms. By sharing his expertise, Shri Vashishth demonstrated how retrofitting can transform existing buildings into inclusive and accessible spaces, enhancing usability and dignity for all occupants.

What Nodal Officers learned?

As a Nodal Officer for Accessibility, I attended a transformative training program at the Bureau of Indian Standards (NITS, Noida) on August 22-23, 2024. Renowned experts led the session, imparting valuable knowledge on creating inclusive built environments. I gained a deeper understanding of the National Building Code of India 2016 and its application in designing accessible spaces. The program's interactive sessions and presentations equipped me with practical skills to implement universal design principles, identify barriers, and develop effective solutions. I now possess a comprehensive understanding of accessibility audits, inclusive signage, and emergency evacuation procedures. With my newfound knowledge and skills, I feel empowered to make a positive impact on our organization's accessibility journey. I'm excited to contribute to creating a more inclusive environment, where everyone can thrive. I'm looking forward to collaborating with our team to implement accessibility initiatives, ensure compliance, and cultivate a culture of inclusivity that benefits everyone.

What is relevance of this workshop to ICMR and the community we live in?

The ICMR Nodal Officers' training program holds immense relevance to our organization and the community we serve. By emphasizing universal design and accessibility, this program aligns perfectly with ICMR's mission to promote health equity, reduce disparities, and foster inclusive excellence. As Nodal Officers, your role is crucial in enhancing the accessibility of our research facilities, institutes, and offices, thereby

fostering an inclusive environment that offers equal opportunities for participation, contribution, and growth. This includes ensuring unfettered access to research, healthcare, and scientific collaboration for individuals with disabilities. By prioritizing accessibility, we can cultivate a diverse and inclusive team, drive innovations, improve research outcomes, and amplify our impact on public health. Through this program, we aim to champion social inclusion, human rights, and inspire a broader movement towards a more equitable society. Your active participation and leadership will be instrumental in creating a transformative impact and realizing a vision of a more just, equitable, and healthy world for all.

Preliminary Accessibility Audit and Report

A preliminary accessibility audit was conducted at ICMR HQ and NIMS building, using a standardized checklist provided by HQ. The audit aimed to identify accessibility barriers and provide recommendations for improvement. The audit team consisted of esteemed experts in the field of accessibility, including Dr. Lakshminarayanan, DDG (Admn.) ICMR (Chairperson), Dr. Hem Lata, Director, National Centre for Disability Studies (IGNOU), Dr. Nek Ram Upadhyay, Head, Indian Spinal Injuries Centre, Delhi, Dr. Jitesh Kumar, Scientist 'D', AMTZ, Vishakhapatnam, Mr. Jagjit Singh, Founder, JS Design, Dr. Ravinder Singh, Scientist-D, ICMR, Mr. Javed Akhtar, Sr. Tech. Officer, and Mrs. Seema Varma, Sr. Tech. Officer (Member Secretary). The preliminary accessibility audit report highlights areas of improvement, including physical infrastructure, communication, and technology, providing recommendations for improving accessibility and promoting inclusive practices at ICMR HQ and NIMS building.

Implementation and Sustainability

ICMR is committed to implementing the recommendations from the accessibility audit report and monitoring progress regularly. A system will be put in place to ensure that accessibility features are maintained and updated regularly. ICMR aims to make accessibility a sustainable and scalable part of its culture, integrating accessibility into all aspects of its work, including research, training, and employment practices.

