Accessible India Campaign

The Department has conceptualized the Accessible India Campaign (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan) as a nation-wide flagship campaign for achieving universal accessibility to enable PwDs to gain access for equal opportunity and live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life in an inclusive society. The campaign targets at enhancing the accessibility of built environment, transport system and information & communication eco-system.

2. India is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). Article 9 of UNCRPD casts an obligation on all the signatory governments to take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas. These measures, which shall include the identification and elimination of obstacles and barriers to accessibility, shall apply to, inter-alia:

   a. Buildings, roads, transportation and other indoor and outdoor facilities, including schools, housing, medical facilities and workplaces;

   b. Information, communications and other services, including electronic services and emergency services.

3. The Convention also mandates that all the Governments shall also take appropriate measures:

   a. To develop, promulgate and monitor the implementation of minimum standards and guidelines for the accessibility of facilities and services open or provided to the public;

   b. To ensure that private entities that offer facilities and services which are open or provided to the public take into account all aspects of accessibility for persons with disabilities;

   c. To provide training for stakeholders on accessibility issues facing persons with disabilities;

   d. To provide in buildings and other facilities open to the public signage in Braille and in easy to read and understand forms;

   e. To provide forms of live assistance and intermediaries, including guidelines, readers and professional sign language interpreters, to facilitate accessibility to buildings and other facilities open to the public;

   f. To promote other appropriate forms of assistance and support to persons with disabilities to ensure their access to information;

g. To promote access for persons with disabilities to new information and communications technologies and systems, including the Internet;

4. Governments at the High Level Inter Governmental Meeting organized by the Govt. of Republic of Korea adopted the ministerial declaration and Incheon Strategy to "Make the Right Real" for PwDs in Asia and Pacific. The Incheon Strategy provides the Asian and Pacific Region, and the world the first set of regionally agreed distinct – inclusive development goals. The Strategy comprises 10 goals, 27 targets and 62 indicators, which build on UNCRPD. Goal No. 3 of the Incheon Strategy mentions that access to the physical environment, public transportation, knowledge, information and communication is a precondition for persons with disabilities to fulfill their rights in an inclusive society. The accessibility of urban, rural and remote areas based on universal design increases safety and ease of use not only for persons with disabilities, but also for all other members of society.

5. On the basis of the international mandates set by the UNCRPD and action points detailed out by the Incheon Strategy, the framework of the Accessible India Campaign was drafted to ensure accessibility across built environment, transport system and information & communication eco-system. The Campaign now serves as a tool to actualize the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 which under Section 40 empowers the Government to lay down the standards of accessibility for the physical environment, transportation, information and communications, including appropriate technologies and systems, and other facilities and services provided to the public in urban and rural areas. Sections 41 & 42 of the Act, provide for accessibility in transport and information and communication technology respectively. Section 43 provides for measures to promote development, production and distribution of universally designed consumer products and accessories for general use for persons with disabilities. Section 44 prescribes mandatory observance of accessibility norms in buildings. Section 45 lays down time limit for making existing infrastructure and premises accessible & Section 46 lays down time limit for accessibility by service providers.

6. **Built Environment Accessibility**

a) An accessible physical environment benefits everyone, not just persons with disabilities. Measures should be undertaken to eliminate obstacles and barriers to indoor and outdoor facilities including schools, medical facilities, and workplaces. These would include not only buildings, but also footpaths, curb cuts, and obstacles that block the flow of pedestrian traffic. Since accessibility of buildings should not be limited to urban areas, but must be extended to the peri-urban and rural areas also.

b) An accessible government building is one, where a person with disabilities has no barrier in entering it and using all the facilities therein. This covers the built environment – services, steps and ramps, corridors, entry gates, emergency exits, parking – as well as indoor and outdoor facilities including lighting, signages, alarm systems and toilets.

c)   Identifying accessible buildings requires accessibility audits that determine if a building meets agreed upon standards and to propose changes to the structure or systems contained therein, so as to deem it universally accessible. Reference to the Department's orders for conducting access audits through empanelled access auditors, may be drawn for finalizing the cost norms for accessible audits.

d)   Standards of accessibility should be as consistent as possible with international standards, such as those of the ISO, taking into account the local context. Under the Rights for Persons with Disabilities Rules 2017, the *Harmonized Guidelines and Space Standards for Barrier Free Environment for Persons with Disability and Elderly Persons* has been notified as the accessibility standard for public centric buildings and its compliance must be ensured while developing new and retrofitting existing buildings.

7.   Transportation System Accessibility

a)   Transportation is a vital component for independent living, and like others in society, PwDs rely on transportation facilities to move from one place to another. The term transportation covers a number of areas including air travel, buses, and trains, therefore making it essential to ensure accessibility in Airports, Railway Stations and Public Transport.

b)   Accessibility in transportation systems covers the built environment – surfaces, steps and ramps, corridors, entry ways, emergency exists, parking including all indoor and outdoor facilities such as lighting, signage, alarm systems and toilets, as well as carriers and the associated systems such as ticket booking, information portals and websites, etc. It also covers service-sector specific features, like aerobridges/ambu-lifts in Airways, accessible coaches in Railways, low floor buses with wide doors in Roadways, etc.

c)   Similar to buildings, standards of accessibility for transportation sectors should also be complied to offer barrier free travel experience to PwDs. Under the Rights for Persons with Disabilities Rules 2017, the *Code of Practice for Bus Body Design Approval* has been notified as the accessibility standard for public transportation carriers (buses).

8.   Information and Communication Eco-System Accessibility

a)   Access to information creates opportunities for everyone in society. People use information in many forms to make decisions about their daily lives, which range from reading price tags, to physically entering a hall, to participating in an event, to reading a pamphlet, to understanding train timetable, or viewing webpages.

b)   The campaign focus on enhancing proportion of accessible and usable public documents and websites, pool of sign language interpreters and proportion of daily captioning and sign-language interpretation of public television news programmes. For making government websites accessible the Department will seek help from NIC regarding accessibility audit of Govt. websites.

c)   Under the Rights for Persons with Disabilities Rules 2017, the *Guideline for Indian Government Websites* has been notified as the accessibility standard for making government websites accessible.

9.   Standards of Accessibility –

a)   Accessibility is about giving equal access to everyone. Without being able to access the facilities and services found in the communities, persons with disabilities will never be fully included. Accessible India Campaign will seek cooperation of all Central Government Departments/Ministries and State Governments to seek "accessible police stations", "accessible hospitals", "accessible tourism", and "accessible digital India" etc.

b)   However, to ensure accessibility across all public centric infrastructure and services, availability of sector-specific accessibility standards is of upmost importance. For this purpose, sector specific Standards/Guidelines of Accessibility through respective Ministries/Departments, including Housing and Urban Affairs, Civil Aviation, Roadways, Railways, School and Higher Education, Culture, Justice, Tourism, MHA, Banking, MeitY, Consumer Affairs, Sports are under formulation. These standards will be made in consultation with the office of the Chief Commissioner of Persons with Disabilities.

c)   Notification of the above-mentioned guidelines is anticipated to be completed by 31 December, 2021 under the Rights for Persons with Disabilities Rules 2017. Upon Notification of the guidelines/standards are notified under the Rights for Persons with Disabilities Rules 2017, compliance to respective standards will become mandatory.

10.   Funds under AIC may also be utilized for the following activities, as per the requirements assessed by the Department from time to time:

i.   Setting up of a Management Information System (MIS) for processing / compilation of data under the scheme.

ii.   Setting up & running of a Programme Management Unit under which technical experts would be hired for monitoring the progress under the scheme, coordination with States / UTs & Central Government Departments, physical verification and accessibility audit of buildings, public places, websites, airports, railway stations etc.

iii.   Engagement of auditors for carrying out accessibility audit

iv.   Engagement of Consultants for secretarial work

v.   Work relating to Research and Evaluation

vi.   Engagement of agency for making websites accessible.

vii.   Organization of workshops / seminars / events etc. related to the campaign

viii.   Contingency funds for making / retrofitting in 3 verticals as and when sudden requirement as requests from States / Ministries / Departments is received for technical / financial assistance/monitoring.

11.   Sunset Clause - The sunset date for the Campaign has been set for March 2024 after which AIC will be merged with the Barrier Free Environment component under SIPDA. The Department has drawn the action plan for completion of targets of the Campaign as well as implementation of the Standards as per the following scheduling –

	Preferable Last Date *(May change on case-to-case basis in alliance to the provisions of the Rights for Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 under Section 45 and 46)*	**Action to be taken**
a.	31 December 2021	• Last date for States/UTs to submit proposals for release of 1st installment of funds • Notification of finalized sector specific guidelines/ standards
b.	30 June 2022	Retrofitting work in all funded buildings under AIC to be completed by States/UTs
c.	31 March 2023	Closing of balance fund release to States/UTs for work undertaken and completed under AIC as reimbursement mode
d.	31 December 2023	Completion of implementation of newly notified accessibility guidelines/standards
e.	31 March 2024	Final closure of the Campaign and merged with Barrier Free Environment component under SIPDA

12.   Sugamya Bharat App – In order to broad base the Accessible India Campaign on Jan-Bhagidari principles, the Sugamya Bharat App, a crowdsourcing mobile application meant for highlighting and enhancing accessibility across these three verticals was launched on 2nd March, 2021. Through this mobile app, complaints related to accessibility under Built Environment including for the Transportation sector are being registered by public anytime and anywhere in India. A dedicated PMU team has been constituted for looking into the management and successful implementation of the Sugamya Bharat App. The Sugamya Bharat App project will also be merged under the Barrier Free Environment component under SIPDA Scheme, subsequently. The crowdsourcing app will continue for the purpose of collating the issues raised by general public in regards to inaccessibility of both government owned and private, public centric infrastructure and services.

13.   Management Information System (MIS) for Accessible India Campaign –In addition to this, the existing MIS portal under AIC is also being enhanced and all the Ministries/Departments beyond AIC targets will be included. The existing MIS portal is being upgraded to be able to capture information of the works of accessibility being carried out across various sectors by respective Ministries/Departments. For this purpose, the department will constitute a PMU team comprising of 5 members, including 1 team leader, 1 technical developer and 3 consultants for functional roles. After FY 2023-24 will be merged under the Barrier Free Environment component under SIPDA Scheme, but the portal will run in continuity to serve as a repository of

data regarding works of accessibility being undertaken across different sectors by various States/UTs and Ministries. This will go on to serve as an inventory for the Government of India, providing information of all the infrastructure and facilities that have been made accessible for persons with disabilities.

14.   Process of Fund Release under Accessible India Campaign

Under Accessible India Campaign the following process is followed for release of grant-in-aid to States/UTs:

a. State/UT Governments prepare cost estimates are prepared as per access audit reports and submit the same to Department, complete in all respect along with Details of Measurements, Details of Rates and drawings with measurements in the prescribed format.

b. The proposals for release of grant-in-aid under Barrier Free and Accessible India component will be examined by a Screening Committee of the Department consisting of Joint Secretary (SIPDA), Director/Deputy Secretary (SIPDA) and two experts in the field of disability, to be nominated by the Department.

c. Implementing Agency is required to follow the General Financial Rules, 2017/Codal Procedure/CVC Guidelines in the matters of contract/financial transactions.

d. Implementing Agency will be open to inspection by an officer/third party agency authorized by the Department or the State Government/UT Administration/National Institutes etc.

e. **Grant-in-Aid will be released in 2 parts - 1st and 2nd installments. Normally they should be 75:25 ratios.** When the Government of India has reasons to believe that grants-in-aid is not being utilized for the approved purpose, the amount would be recovered from the Implementing Agency and no further assistance would be given to the Agency. Ministry will be at liberty to blacklist such organization and to take legal action as per law.

f. The GIA would be given in a savings account and not any other account which draws no interest. However, Interest on GIA may not be reused and may be returned. The same may also be reflected in the UCs (format as per the extant GFR Rules) provided by the State Govt/UTs from time to time. Implementing Agency shall submit final Utilization Certificate for the entire grant along with a project completion report within twelve months of the closure of the financial year. Un-utilized grant-in-aid, if any, is to be refunded to the Ministry. In case the work/project is not completed within the stipulated timeframe and further time is sought to complete the same, the organization concerned has to intimate the Ministry and also explain the reason for the delay. If the project is not completed within the timeframe/extended timeframe the organization concerned has to refund the grant forthwith.

g. Each proposal should be forwarded to Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities along with requisite documents as per instructions issued in this regard from time to time.

h. The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities may issue further guidelines in pursuance of aims and objectives of the Scheme for implementation of various provisions of RPwD Act.

i. If found technically feasible the proposals are then sent for IFD concurrence followed by according of Administrative Approval and final release of Grant- in-Aid to the State/UT Government. For this multiple correspondence may be required to be conducted with State/UT Governments for clarification or submission of documents, as the case may be. Also, the State/UT Governments are to ensure updating profile the PFMS portal for seamless fund transfer.

j. In case the proposal is not found to be technically feasible, the State/UT Governments are required to submit revised cost estimates basis the recommendations of the Department.

k. In case of request for 2nd Installment of funds, the State/UT Governments are required to send proposals in prescribed format with details of tender costs and work progress report. The cost of the work will be limited to the preliminary estimates provided by the agency or the tendered costs, whichever is less (unless quantifiable and valid expenses under the scheme are presented, in which case the incremental costs will again be examined by the Department for consideration basis on valid proofs such as UCs, Photographic Documentation, Work Progress Reports, etc.).

l. Overall for release of any funds it is mandatory that Utilization Certificates pending in respect of earlier fund releases are submitted to the Department before requesting for grant-in-aid. **At-least 75% of UCs for AIC should be submitted before requesting for GIA.**

15. Formats for submission of proposals pertaining to release of first and second instalment of funds for retrofitting of buildings under the Accessible India Campaign –

a) Under the Accessible India Campaign's target of built-up environment, for Phase-1, grant-in-aid is provided to State/UT Governments for making their buildings accessible in 2 parts/installments. Therefore, to ensure correctness of the proposals being submitted to the Department for release of GIA, the following formats have been laid out:

b) <u>List of Documents required for release of 1st Installment of GIA:</u>

1. Cover letter from State Department mentioning number of buildings being proposed and amount of GIA requested. Compiled information as per Table 1 to be annexed with letter.

2. Cost Estimates (All documents to be vetted by Officer of rank equal to Executive Engineer of PWD or above) with

   a. Accessibility feature wise Details of Measurements, Details of Rates and drawings with measurements

   b. Details of SoR

     c. Justification (statutory document/ Govt. Order) of applying charges such as departmental charges, handling charges, transportation fee, additional taxes etc.

3. In case executing agency is not State PWD, justification of signatory of cost estimate being of rank equivalent or higher to Executive Engineer, PWD

4. Status of UCs for previous funds released. All UCs to be submitted as per Form 12 of GFR 2017 along with copy of bills presented by executing agency.

Table 1:

Sl. No.	Name of Building	General Details		Work being executed by *(Div and name of executing agency)*	Accessible features proposed with broad specifications	GIA requested
		MIS Unique ID, Ownership, No. of Floors, Use	Status of data uploaded on MIS			
1						
2						
3						

c) List of Documents required for release of 2nd Instalment of GIA:

     a. Cover letter from State Department mentioning number of buildings being proposed and amount of GIA requested.

     b. Request letter from executing agency along with compiled information as per Table 2 annexed with the letter.

     c. Status of UCs for previous funds released. All UCs to be submitted as per Form 12 of GFR 2017 along with copy of bills presented by executing agency.

     d. Brief of schedule and plan to complete work in terms of time required to complete work, provisions for periodic monitoring, mid-term evaluation and detailed impact studies etc. and other requirements. If need be the same may be provided building wise.

Table 2:

Sl. No.	Name of Building	General Details		GIA Details						Physical work progress (in %)
				Sanction details			Expenditure details		Amount requested for completion	
		MIS Unique ID, Ownership, Executing Agency	Status of data uploaded on MIS	Sanction Order No. and Date of release	Amount Sanctioned by DEPwD	Amount released by DEPwD	Actual tender cost *(including taxes and charges)*	Expenditure incurred *(including excess expenditure incurred by State Govt.)*		
1										
2										
3										