A Court for All: Paving the Way for Greater Accessibility in the Supreme Court for Persons with Disabilities, Women & Senior Citizens

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Committee on Accessibility
Supreme Court of India

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Executive Summary

This report presents an in-depth study, conducted by the Committee on Accessibility, of the accessibility issues faced by persons with disabilities, women-particularly during pregnancy, and senior citizens in the Supreme Court of India. These issues fall into two key areas that require comprehensive examination: physical infrastructure and functional services. While the physical aspect relates to the tangible facilities and spaces, the functional aspect pertains to the operational elements and services provided. Both dimensions were assessed to determine how well they meet the needs of our target groups, especially in vital areas like courtrooms, pathways, washrooms, drinking water facilities, waiting zones, parking facilities, administrative offices, IT services, mediation centre, mentioning branch, canteen and dedicated assistance. Furthermore, the report briefly addresses the requirements delineated in The Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (Prevention and Control) Act, 2017, concentrating specifically on the special procedures in court for HIV-positive/protected persons.

The Committee on Accessibility undertook a multi-pronged methodology: surveys, interviews, on-site visits, process evaluations, and accessibility audits. This meticulous approach resulted in the identification of gaps in physical and functional accessibility, shaping practical recommendations to improve accessibility for all at the Supreme Court. Key findings reveal issues such as the absence of wheelchair-friendly amenities, a lack of clear signages, a lack of tactile flooring in many areas, a lack of designated seating in courtrooms, waiting areas, and filing counters for persons with disabilities, expectant mothers, and senior citizens. The restroom facilities continue to pose difficulties, especially for individuals with disabilities and expecting mothers due to their location and the absence of comprehensive accessibility features. Challenges extend from the primary entry, with inaccessible pathways, to the security checkpoints, which are not fully equipped for wheelchair screenings. The Mentioning Office exhibited challenges with its cramped counter space and narrow passageway. The layout of the canteen is restrictive, ATMs pose accessibility issues, and the Mediation Centre needs more inclusive accommodations.

Drinking water facilities are situated far from some courtrooms, presenting accessibility challenges, especially for those with mobility constraints.

From a functional standpoint, challenges noticed include issues related to accessibility to services, documentation, and facilities. This includes a lack of sign language interpreters and technology suited for the visually impaired, lack of updates of all processing stages of fresh cases, inaccessible documents for persons with disabilities, a general lack of awareness about the needs of such individuals, the absence of specialized service windows, and a dearth of online resources on the Supreme Court website tailored for persons with disabilities. The Supreme Court's online platform requires comprehensive updates to become universally accessible. Furthermore, there is an absence of a framework dealing with the de-identification of HIV-positive/protected persons, pseudonym protocols, and to prioritize cases involving HIV-positive/protected individuals.

To address these concerns, the report provides suggestions such as:

- Introduce accessible route maps, accessible pathways, designated parking, and refurbishment of courtrooms and modifications/relocation of mentioning office.

- Provision of sign language interpretation, an option for persons with disabilities to request that all documents in a case must be accessible, regular updates on the processing of fresh cases, need for protocols for the mediation centre to enable participation of persons with disabilities, elderly, and pregnant woman, and establishment of a dedicated section for persons with disabilities in a registry and permanent accessibility committee.

- Overhaul restrooms to ensure accessibility and modify drinking water facilities. Establishment of a lactation room, changing room and reserved seating in the auditorium.

- Augmentation of IT services, website enhancements for broad accessibility, development of a separate webpage dedicated to accessibility and integrate assistive technologies.

- Implement an equal opportunity policy, fire safety measures, granting reasonable accommodations to lawyers with disabilities, and encouraging accessibility improvements across all facets of the Supreme Court.
- Devise a framework to enable the de-identification of HIV-positive persons during legal proceedings to protect their identity. Additionally, prioritize cases of HIV-positive/protected persons.

In essence, this report serves as a blueprint for ushering in a more accessible Supreme Court for all.

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Preface

It is with great pleasure that I present this report on behalf of the Committee on Accessibility. I would like to express my gratitude to the Hon'ble Chief Justice of India, Dr. Justice D. Y. Chandrachud, as it was his foresight in constituting the Committee, that enabled us to embark on this crucial project.

The Committee undertook a comprehensive analysis of the court's infrastructure, facilities, practices, and services, with a particular focus on the needs of persons with disabilities. The Committee also expanded its purview to incorporate the distinctive challenges encountered by women, particularly during pregnancy, the elderly and attended to concerns specified under The Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (Prevention and Control) Act, 2017, focusing on the crucial aspects affecting HIV-positive/protected persons in legal proceedings. The report represents the culmination of our exhaustive efforts, bringing together insights garnered from a thorough examination, including surprise visits and inspections, physical and functional audits, and the resulting recommendations.

Within these pages, is an in-depth exploration of physical and functional accessibility, and also suggestions aimed at strengthening these dimensions. This report integrates the insights obtained from questionnaires, site visits, interviews, audits and surveys. I am delighted to note that we were able to engage with a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including persons with disabilities, advocates, and the wider public, to grasp their perspectives and experiences. Moreover, feedback from employees with disabilities at the Supreme Court of India also significantly deepened our understanding.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all the members of the Committee and Sub-Committees in the preparation of this report. I would also like to express our appreciation to the stakeholders who contributed their valuable feedback and suggestions.

Justice S. Ravindra Bhat
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Chairperson, Committee on Accessibility

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Acknowledgement

We wish to convey our profound appreciation to those whose invaluable contributions shaped this report. We extend our gratitude to the members of the sub-committees focused on physical and functionality access. Their insights were instrumental in shaping the committee's path. Special thanks to Mr. Nilesh Singit for his meticulous audit of physical accessibility and insightful contributions, and to Mr. Rahul Bajaj for his invaluable suggestions and aid in drafting the report. We are grateful to Prof. Sanjay Jain for his thorough review and intellectual input, and to Ms. Shakti Mishra for her dedicated effort in interaction and collecting inputs from employees with disabilities. We are grateful to Mr V. Sridhar Reddy, Advocate, for providing inputs, and to Mr Sunil Chauhan, Additional Registrar, for his role in project coordination, invaluable perspectives on accessibility, and assistance in draft preparation. Our appreciation also extends to Mr. Hargurvarinder S. Jaggi, Registrar, for his insightful inputs on digital platforms, and Mr. Mahesh Tanajirao Patankar, Registrar, for providing data on various aspects of infrastructure.

Beyond the insights of the sub-committees, we were fortunate to receive contributions from Ms. Priya Hingorani, Senior Advocate, Dr. Shweta Hingorani, Advocate, and Dr. Smriti Singh, Associate Professor at Maitreyi College, University of Delhi. We also benefited from the inputs of Ms. R. Arulmozhiselvi, a Member of Human Resources at the E-Committee.

Special acknowledgement goes to those who rendered research and other support. Gratitude to Mr. Husain Aanis Khan for research; Mr. Amarendra Kumar, Consultant (Research), Centre for Research & Planning, Supreme Court of India, for his inputs; Mr. Amar Jain, Advocate, for insights on equal opportunity policy; and Ms. Aditi Navrang and Ms. Shweta Ramachandran, NLSIU, Bangalore for their questionnaire analysis. Dr Mukesh Nasa, Assistant Registrar-cum-Private Secretary, for providing excellent assistance during the physical accessibility audit and for providing invaluable insights, and Ms. Ayusmita Samal for her invaluable assistance in designing the questionnaires. Many thanks to Ms. Veda Singh, Law Researcher, for her meticulous review of the draft.

We extend our appreciation to the staff of the Supreme Court of India for their support to the Committee, which was crucial for fulfilling our responsibilities. A special mention goes to Mr. Manoranjan Kumar for providing essential data on aspects like the proximity of washrooms, drinking water facilities, etc., to the courtrooms. We sincerely thank the Central Public Works Department (CPWD) officials for their invaluable contribution and unwavering support throughout the process.

Last but not least, we thank all persons who lent to us their expertise, passion and commitment to accessibility. The aspirations and rights of persons with disabilities guided our path throughout the preparation of this report, and it is to them that we dedicate this report.

Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1 Background

Over the years, the Supreme Court of India has consistently improved its operational protocols and physical infrastructure, with a particular focus on accommodating the diverse needs of all those who come within its precincts. On November 28, 2022, the Hon'ble Chief Justice Dr. D Y Chandrachud established a Committee on Accessibility, chaired by Hon'ble Mr. Justice S. Ravindra Bhat, with the aim of making the Supreme Court more accessible and inclusive. The formation of the Committee on Accessibility stemmed from a vision aimed at making the Supreme Court of India accessible to all. The Committee constituted includes members such as Dr. Sanjay Jain, a professor at the National Law School of India University, Bengaluru; Mr. Nilesh Singit, an Independent Accessibility Expert nominated by the Centre for Disability Studies, NALSAR University of Law; Mr. V. Sridhar Reddy, an advocate nominated by the Supreme Court Bar Association; Ms. Shakti Mishra, an employee of the Supreme Court of India; and Mr. Sunil Chauhan, Member (Secretary) of the Committee.

The Supreme Court's physical precincts comprise three main building blocks: Main Building Complex, Annexe Building and Additional Building Complex. Inside these areas, there are seventeen courtrooms of Judges, two courtrooms of Registrars, administrative offices, libraries, canteens, pass counters, an auditorium, conference halls, a dispensary, a bank, ATMs, offices of the Supreme Court Bar Association and the Supreme Court Advocate on Record Association, lawyers' chambers, offices of the Attorney General and Solicitor General, and their related offices. Each day the Supreme Court sees a footfall of thousands of visitors from all walks of life, mainly comprising of advocates, staff, litigants, journalists, security personnel, and a myriad of others who traverse its corridors. Even on Saturdays, the Court premises resonate with the footsteps of those partaking in guided tours.

In India's journey towards inclusivity, the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (RPwD Act) stands as a pivotal legislation, anchoring its principles on the globally recognized UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The foundational principles, derived from the RPwD Act and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, provided a robust framework to evaluate the current physical and functional accessibility in the Supreme Court of India.

Building upon the foundations laid by previous efforts, the Committee on Accessibility initiated an exhaustive analysis of the court's infrastructure, facilities, practices, and services, with special attention to the requirements of persons with disabilities. The Committee considered it appropriate to extend purview beyond considerations of physical challenges. Notably, the Committee conscientiously turned its gaze towards the unique challenges faced by women, especially during pregnancy, and senior citizens, as a considerable number of Advocates are senior citizens.

The culmination of these concerted efforts is the present report, a repository of insights garnered from an exhaustive study encompassing a physical and functional audit, surveys, interviews etc. and the resulting recommendations, to ensure that the Supreme Court of India is accessible to all. The report provides a thorough analysis of both physical and functional accessibility, offering recommendations for improvement. Furthermore, the invaluable reservoir of feedback amassed through the distribution of questionnaires finds its place within the pages of this document.

The Committee on Accessibility, through this report, reveals that there are still areas to enhance further the accessibility and inclusivity of the Supreme Court of India, ensuring an even more welcoming workplace for everyone.

1.2 Mandate

The Committee was established with the following mandate:

i. Conduct an accessibility audit of the Supreme Court premises and its functioning (the audit shall extend to both physical accessibility as well as technological accessibility);

ii. Prepare and release a questionnaire for persons with disabilities, who visit the Supreme Court premises (including employees of the Supreme Court, advocates, litigants, interns, etc.) to assess the nature and extent of the problems they face;

iii. Prepare a report which contains:

a) The results of the accessibility audit;

b) The results of the survey of persons with disabilities; and

c) Recommendations/proposals geared towards removing barriers to access.

iv. Carry out any other activity required to conduct the accessibility audit.

1.3 Methodology

To systematically address the issue of accessibility in the Supreme Court of India, the Committee on Accessibility employed a multi-faceted methodology that encompassed diverse research techniques. This methodology was designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state of accessibility and identify areas for improvement to enhance accessibility. The key components of the methodology are as follows:

a) Physical Accessibility Audit: A thorough physical audit was carried out by visiting the Supreme Court buildings and premises. Detailed measurements and assessments were conducted to evaluate the accessibility of various areas, such as entrances, corridors, washrooms, drinking water facilities, library, canteen, courtrooms, administrative offices, and guest house. The committee utilized established accessibility guidelines and standards to evaluate the compliance of the court's infrastructure with the best practices concerning barrier-free access.

b) Operational Framework Evaluation: Through this study, an in-depth analysis of the operational practices was conducted to identify potential challenges. Key processes including filing and processing of fresh matters, mentioning of matters, and functioning of the Mediation Centre, were assessed for their functional accessibility. Furthermore, the court's digital platforms were assessed

for their accessibility to individuals with disabilities. The system for issuing entry passes to the Supreme Court was also examined.

c) **Meetings of Committee and Charting out the Entire Course:** Within our methodology, a significant aspect involved the committee's meetings and the process of charting out the entire course of our study. The committee convened a total of three formal meetings, where detailed discussions and deliberations took place. The committee's activities encompassed not only formal meetings but also numerous informal meetings, continuous interactions among themselves and with members of sub-committees and stakeholders. During the meetings, a road map of the study was charted out, identifying key areas of focus and objectives. This strategic planning phase was instrumental in shaping the direction and goals of our research.

d) **Questionnaires and Stakeholder Inputs:** To solicit a wider range of perspectives and insights, the Committee designed and uploaded questionnaires. For wider outreach and publication, the questionnaires were not only uploaded on the Supreme Court website, but also on the websites of all High Courts. These stakeholders included persons with disabilities, advocates, court staff, disability rights organizations, and members of the public. The first questionnaire focused on accessibility and contained 27 questions. It garnered responses from 140 participants, including 26 transgender persons. Among respondents with disabilities, 39 had visual impairments, 27 had locomotor disabilities, and 37 identified as having 'any other' disability. The second questionnaire circulated was tailored for disability rights experts. This questionnaire consisted of 14 questions and garnered 19 responses. The responses collected through the questionnaires provided invaluable first-hand experiences and opinions, enriching the committee's understanding of the challenges faced and the improvements needed.

e) **Two Sub-Committees:** In our approach to comprehensively assess accessibility, two sub-committees were constituted. One sub-committee was specifically responsible for the examination of physical accessibility, whereas the other

concentrated on the evaluation of functional accessibility, respectively, with the following members:

S. No.	Category	Name
1.	Officer from the Computer Cell/NIC/E-Court	Sh. H.S. Jaggi, Registrar (Technology)
2.	Three lawyers practicing in Supreme Court of India	1. Sh. Rahul Bajaj, Advocate 2. Sh. V. Sridhar Reddy, Advocate 3. Sh. Manoj Saxena, Advocate
3.	Expert Engineer from CPWD having experience of audit	Sh. Manohar Lal, Executive Engineer, Civil, CPWD
4.	Officer/official of the Supreme Court of India	1. Dr. Mukesh Nasa, AR-cum-PS 2. Sh. Harjinder Singh, Jr. Court Assistant
5.	Two Members of the Committee	1. Sh. Nilesh Singit, Independent Accessibility Expert 2. Smt. Shakti Mishra, Librarian

These sub-committees engaged in extensive discussions among themselves, as well as with committee members and stakeholders.

f) Independent Inputs through Women's Involvement: In addition to surveys and committee activities, our research received significant inputs from women. We specifically sought the insights and expertise of women in our study. We received invaluable feedback from Ms. Priya Hingorani, Senior Advocate, Dr. Shweta Hingorani, Advocate, and Dr. Smriti Singh, Associate Professor at Maitreyi College, University of Delhi, who is a visually impaired disability rights activist. Furthermore, we are appreciative of the independent inputs provided by Ms. R. Arulmozhiselvi, Member Human Resources, E-Committee. They submitted their insights to further enrich our research.

Based on these inputs, a draft report was circulated among the Sub-Committees. Several suggestions and comments were received, which were duly incorporated.

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Chapter 2
Physical Accessibility

Ensuring equal access and inclusivity in the built environment is a fundamental aspect of promoting the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities. Architectural access audits play a crucial role in evaluating the accessibility of buildings, public spaces, and facilities to identify barriers and implement necessary modifications. The audit not only focuses on challenges but also considers the needs of various segments of the population, including persons with disabilities, senior citizens, pregnant women, and temporarily injured individuals. Women with disabilities may face unique challenges related to accessibility, safety, and privacy. Senior citizens may require additional support in navigating spaces, such as handrails and adequate lighting. Pregnant women may need accommodations for their changing physical needs. Temporarily injured individuals may require modifications to access buildings and facilities during their recovery period.

Creating accessible spaces goes beyond legal compliance; it also demonstrates a commitment to human rights, social responsibility, and fostering inclusivity and diversity. Part I of the chapter provides a concise overview of the physical accessibility audit report, focusing on key observations and suggested actions. In Part II, challenges specific to women are emphasized, while Part III offers insights into the views and experiences of employees with disabilities. Part IV highlights the information gathered from two questionnaires that were made available on the Supreme Court website as well as on the websites of various High Courts.

PART I

2.1 Approach and Methodology

The approach to the study of physical accessibility was *participatory.* Stakeholders with disabilities including staff and advocates were engaged through surveys and in-person discussions to understand the constraints faced by individuals with disabilities on Supreme Court premises. The audit team, consisting of Mr. Nilesh

Singit and Mr. Sameer Singit, conducted the physical accessibility audit. Their assessment spanned the scrutiny of all entry and exit points, courtrooms, the guest house, common facilities, and pathways. They examined the Main building, the Annexe, and the Additional Building Complex. **The detailed audit report of physical accessibility is in Appendix A. This report (Appendix A) provides a detailed examination of various facilities, including courtrooms, canteens, library, staircases, drinking water facilities, washrooms, pathways, wellness center, ATMs, and guesthouse, among others. For a more comprehensive understanding, it includes observations, photographs, diagrams, and annexures highlighting the existing gaps and offering recommendations for improvements. For detailed insights on physical accessibility, one can refer to the detailed report provided in Appendix A.**

2.2 Key Gaps and Suggested Recommendations

The key findings and recommendations are summarized as below:

Observation	Recommendation
(a) Signage & Route Map There are no route maps at entry points, and the signage within the Supreme Court premises is inadequate.	• Accessible route maps must be available at the entrance of the Supreme Court premises as well as at a few points in the Supreme Court premises. • Appropriate signage should be installed across the Supreme Court premises. Signage is important not just for individuals with disabilities but for all visitors. • There should be Braille signs or markers identifying or signifying accessible entrances and exits. Also, large fonts on the boards and tactile should be laid down in the building. • Additionally, room numbers should also be mentioned in Braille.
(b) Pathways Pathways across the Supreme Court premises are not levelled and continuous. At some places, gratings are too wide and	• Levelled pathways with tactile blocks are required to guide individuals with disabilities. Poorly managed pathways are also inconvenient and risky for all visitors.

persons with reduced mobility and vision are exposed to the risk of tripping and injuring themselves.	• The navigating space should have more clearance. The surface of the pathways should be smooth. Accessible vehicles should be provided from the main gate to the ground floor of Court No.1. • There should be separate pathways for individuals with disabilities because those in wheelchairs find it difficult to move around in crowded pathways and inside the Court.

(c) Common Area Facilities

Common facilities regularly accessed by individuals with disabilities across the Supreme Court premises, are covered here:

Observation	Recommendation
Washrooms: There are some accessible washrooms across the entire Supreme Court premises. However, there needs to be uniformity. There are some discrepancies in the implementation that can be immediately fixed. There needs to be separate toilets allocated for transgender persons. In the interim, till new ones are built - accessible toilets for people with disabilities can be used by transgender persons. An additional "T" should be added to the existing signage for an accessible washroom.	• Access to the washroom is the most basic requirement for any person. It is recommended that every building should have a sufficient and easily accessible unisex restroom. • Places like washrooms need to have an attendant to assist persons with disabilities, some of whom may be unable to use the facilities due to their wheelchair, or other aid. • Make sure reaching the washroom is also not challenging. Signage must be provided along with information in Braille, tactile pathways, and strips to access the toilets. • Sanitary pad dispensers, and appropriate bins for diaper disposal and sanitary waste need to be installed.
Drinking water units: Accessible water units are not installed on every floor. There needs to be uniformity. There are some discrepancies in implementation that can be immediately fixed.	• All water units should be equipped with taps that all visitors to the Supreme Court premises can use, irrespective of disability. • Drinking water units should be made more accessible. In cases where there is a distance of more than 40 feet to access drinking water in the vicinity of courtrooms, the Advocates or other visitors, particularly senior citizens

	and pregnant women should be permitted to carry water bottles. Alternatively, portable drinking water units should be installed outside courtrooms.
Staircases: Handrails at present do not extend beyond the start and end of the steps. The handrail adjoining the main staircase does not extend beyond the stairs. Persons with visual impairments thus find it difficult to assess where the steps begin.	• Railings must be present along the staircase and extend beyond the steps' start and end. • Tactile markings will help to demarcate the start and end of the stairs.
Courtrooms: Some courtrooms have two or more steps, and there is inadequate space to construct traditional ramps of 1/12 gradient. Regular ramps would cause obstacles to everybody.	• Carefully assessing the need for and constructing ramps at suitable points will greatly enhance accessibility across the Courtrooms. Hydraulic/portable ramps are recommended, considering space constraints. • Depending on the design of the Courtrooms, one could either have dedicated spots in each row for wheelchair parking, along with ensuring access to the rows or a staircase with wheelchair climbing feasibility.

(d) Parking spots

Special parking spots for individuals with disabilities at appropriate places are essential to ensure they do not have to travel long distances, particularly if they use mobility aids like wheelchairs, after exiting their vehicles.

Make sure the reserved spots are used only by individuals with disabilities, and are not occupied by others.

(e) Accessibility Concerns in Courtroom Doorways: The heavy curtains at the entrance and exit of courtrooms present significant challenges and risks for individuals with disabilities, pregnant women, and the senior citizens. Replacing these curtains with tinted glass or film would be beneficial, which can still reduce glare and regulate temperature, ensuring easier access for all.

(f) **Mentioning Branch:** In the Supreme Court of India, the practice of mentioning holds significant procedural importance, enabling urgent matters to be prioritized. Urgency applications, accompanied by letters specifying the urgency, are submitted in person at the Mentioning Branch. While the branch does accept email submissions, this method is reserved for select situations and is constrained to a brief window from 10 to 10:30 a.m. Broadly speaking, barring a few exceptions, both the application for mentioning and the urgency letter are required to be presented in physical form. The branch typically sees a traffic of 50 to 55 physical applications daily. A visit to the Mentioning Branch, during the survey, highlighted some logistical concerns: the counter offers only two small windows for interaction/submission of applications, and the available space leading from the counter to the wall is around 6.5 feet in breadth. This cramped setup considerably impedes movement. Moreover, lawyers often arrive with either a registered clerk or a junior, implying that approximately 100 individuals crowd the counter daily between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., exacerbating the space constraints and posing challenges to persons with disabilities, pregnant women and elderly. Additionally, the passage is quite narrow.

Addressing the aforesaid challenges at the Mentioning Branch of the Supreme Court of India requires several strategic solutions. Relocating the Mentioning Branch to a more spacious area or a structured waiting zone with a token system can organize the flow and reduce crowding, ensuring a smoother experience for all involved.

(g) **Accessibility Issues on the Third Floor of the Main Building:** The third floor of the main building has the Faster Cell and Court Master wings (above Court Nos. 8 & 9, and 6 & 7). However, a significant accessibility concern arises as the elevator service only reaches the second floor. Consequently, the only access to the third floor is via stairs, which poses a considerable challenge for individuals with mobility issues or those reliant on wheelchairs. To address this, several solutions can be considered: extending the elevator service to the third floor or using a stairlift to bridge the gap between the second and third floors.

2.3 Other Suggestions

(a) Fire and Safety Precautions: Fire alarms, which would work for alerting most people, will not work for persons with hearing impairments. Thus, the presence of a visual and/ or vibrating alarm throughout the Court premises should be mandatory.

(b) Improving Accessibility with Travelators: To enhance accessibility for persons with disabilities, it is recommended to install travelators between the buildings within the Supreme Court premises. These travelators will act as convenient transportation systems, simplifying access to various areas for individuals facing mobility challenges. This infrastructure enhancement would provide individuals with disabilities and senior citizens with a smoother and more efficient way to move between buildings, reducing the need for extended walks or navigating uneven surfaces.

(c) Vehicles for Persons with Reduced Mobility: Battery operated vehicles may be considered by the Supreme Court as there are long stretches that can be difficult to traverse for a mobility impaired person, or senior citizen, or anyone who requires help to navigate the premises. A mobility device is required to take the persons with disabilities from the entry gates to the court rooms and other areas of the court. These battery-operated vehicles would be of great use moving from one section of the building to another. These vehicles need to be compact to allow them to move with ease without being a hindrance to others, and driven by an attendant appointed for assisting persons with disabilities. This vehicle should be able to take individuals to the courtrooms or other sections of the premises. These vehicles need to be customised for the specific requirements of the Court. An assessment of the number of such vehicles needs to be done to address the various entry points to the Supreme Court. Once procured, regular maintenance will also be required. Some relevant aspects in this regard are:

- Easy to Access, User Friendly
- Low Maintenance with Zero Pollution and Low Decibel Noise
- Powerful Motor and Intelligent Controllers

- Battery Charging Generator, High Range Per Charge
- Customization Capability – wheelchair users can be accommodated
- Wide selection of carts is available for different uses

PART II

2.4 Physical Accessibility Challenges Faced by Women

Women workforce/lawyers: In Part I of this chapter, we delved briefly into the physical accessibility challenges faced by persons with disabilities while also touching upon the needs of women and senior citizens. However, it is imperative to understand the unique challenges faced by women. This part of Chapter 2, highlights issues that are primarily based upon interactions with women lawyers and women staff members, pertaining to the bare basic amenities, such as access to drinking water, toilets, sanitary pad dispensers, etc.

The workforce at the Supreme Court of India as of 29.08.2023 is as follows:

Table-1: Workforce in the Supreme Court of India

	Male	**Female**
Regular Working Employees	1706	438
BVG Staff Deputed	535	56
Outsourced Staff	102	92
Retired Staff Working	33	5
Staff Hired Directly	2	1
Total No. of Employees	**2378**	**592**

Women represent 20% of the total workforce in the Supreme Court of India. Delving deeper, of the 592 female employees, 438 are regular employees. The remaining are outsourced BVG staff, re-engaged retired staff, etc. Apart from them, female lawyers and female registered clerks also access the Supreme Court premises.

The data of proximity cards reflects that female lawyers who access or may access the Supreme Court (through proximity cards) are:

Table-2: Women advocates in the Supreme Court having proximity cards

Role/Designation	Number of Women Advocates
SCBA (Supreme Court Bar Association) Advocate	1154
AOR (Advocate on Record)	301
Non-SCBA Advocates	797
Retired High Court Judges/Senior Advocate/Law Officers	13

The Supreme Court Bar Association on request by Mr. H.S. Jaggi, Registrar, Technology, provided[1] the following data about its members:

Table-3: Number of lawyers registered with SCBA

S. No.	Particulars		Total (Figures)
1.	Total number of Advocates* Registered as SCBA members		
		Male	14652
		Female	3293
		Third Gender	--
		Total	**17945**
2.	Total number of Senior Advocates registered as SCBA members		
		Male	684
		Female	31
		Third Gender	-
		Total	**715**

[1] Information about SCBA members - male, female, senior citizens provided by the office of SCBA by email dated 04.09.2023.

3.	Total number of Advocates-on-Record registered as SCBA members		
		Male	86
		Female	27
		Third Gender	
		Total	**113**
4.	Total number of female Advocates registered as SCBA members		
		Female	3293
		Total	3293
5.	Total number of Advocates* registered as SCBA members, who are more than 60 years old. *Advocates include - Advocates, Senior Advocates, Advocates-on-Record		
		Male	2127
		Female	228
		Third Gender	-
		Total	2355
6.	Total number of Advocates, who are persons with disability. The nature of Disability - (For e.g. Visual impairment, physical disability - locomotor, one-limb, both limbs, hearing impairment, speech and language disability, intellectual disability, mental behaviour, disability caused due to chronic neurological conditions, Parkinson' disease, multiple disabilities) Please specify the total figure next to the “type of disability”	No specific category in record maintained by SCBA	
		Male	
		Female	
		Third Gender	

The above data indicates that there are 17,945 registered members of SCBA, out of which 3,293 are women. There are 31 registered female Senior Advocates. It cannot be lost sight that there are over 2,355 SCBA members, who are above the age of 60, of which 228 are women.

Physical Accessibility Issues

Some of the physical accessibility issues that require consideration are as follows:

(a) Proximity to washrooms: The following table reflects the nearest washroom for women, persons with disabilities, and Universal Rest Rooms (URR) from the Court Rooms (CR).

Table-4: Proximity to washrooms

S. No.	Courtroom (CR)	Distance to Women's Washroom	Distance to PwD Washroom	Distance to URR
1.	CR1	138 ft	508 ft	95 ft
2.	CR2	226 ft	531 ft	30 ft
3.	CR3	215 ft	490 ft	110 ft
4.	CR4	180 ft	465 ft	185 ft
5.	CR5	214 ft	542 ft	20 ft
6.	CR6	12 ft	300 ft	300 ft
7.	CR7	14 ft	300 ft	300 ft
8.	CR8	22 ft	350 ft	400 ft
9.	CR9	24 ft	350 ft	400 ft
10.	CR10	79 ft	192 ft	508 ft
11.	CR11	125 ft	204 ft	522 ft
12.	CR12	115 ft	193 ft	519 ft
13.	CR13	70 ft	204 ft	535 ft
14.	CR14	58 ft	204 ft	531 ft
15.	CR15	79 ft	215 ft	542 ft
16.	CR16	90 ft	226 ft	485 ft
17.	CR17	56 ft	238 ft	480 ft

The following points emerge from the above data:

- The proximity of women's washrooms varies across the courtrooms. For instance, Court Room 2 has a women's washroom 226 ft away, while CR6 and CR7 have much closer access at 12 ft and 14 ft, respectively. This variance means women, including female lawyers, might face convenience or inconvenience depending on the courtroom they are in.

- The proximity of washrooms for persons with disabilities shows a wide variation across the courtrooms. While CR10 offers the shortest distance to a PwD washroom at 192 ft, courtrooms like CR6 and CR7 are further distanced at 300 ft each. Notably, CR5 also presents a significant distance to the PwD washroom at 542 ft. Such expansive distances can be particularly challenging for individuals with mobility concerns. The difference in these distances underscores the need for a more equitable distribution of facilities to ensure accessibility for all.

- URR distances also vary with CR8 and CR9 having the most distant URRs at 400 ft. This could be inconvenient for those in need of these facilities.

The data highlights a marked inconsistency in the accessibility of washrooms for women lawyers across various courtrooms. While certain courtrooms provide good proximity to essential amenities, others present notable challenges due to extended distances. There is a need for a more strategic layout and a balanced distribution of women-specific and universal facilities throughout the court complex.

The aforesaid washrooms have certain issues: sharp edges of counters, slabs, iron brackets underneath the slab, and obstruction by sewage manholes in front of the bathroom cubicles of the ground floor washroom. These issues constrain access and expose pregnant women, senior citizens and persons with disabilities to risk of injury. In general, washrooms lack proper ventilation, adequate covered dustbins, sanitary pad dispensers, paper or cloth towels, and toilet paper. All these can be addressed in the short term by adopting suitable measures.

The concerns regarding the placement of the incinerator-used sanitary napkin disposal unit in the washroom common area have been noted. It is suggested that, for

the comfort and privacy of women, the dispenser should be relocated to a more secluded area, preferably inside a room with a door. Such a placement will encourage more women to utilize the dispenser without feeling self-conscious, as the current location in an open, common area is causing discomfort.

The number of washrooms for women, persons with disabilities, and Universal Rest Rooms (URR), located in the Main Building Complex and Additional Building Complex (ABC) are as follows:

Table-5: Number of washrooms (Ladies/PWD/URR)

S.No.	Location	Ladies' Toilet	PWD Toilets	URR
A. MAIN BUILDING COMPLEX				
1.	Main Building High Security Zone – without Hon'ble Judges Chambers area	24	03	02
2.	Old Lawyers Chambers Block No 1 to 4	04	--	
3.	Utility Lounge (Inside)	01	01	
4.	Litigant Cafeteria (Inside)	01	--	
	Total	**30**	**04**	**02**
B. ADDITIONAL BUILDING COMPLEX (ABC)				
1.	A Block	06	06	-
2.	A Block Basement – I	01	01	01
3.	A Block Basement – II	01	01	01
4.	B Block	18	08	01
5.	NALSA Ground Floor B Block	01	-	-
6.	Congregation Hall 2nd Floor B Block	02	-	-
7.	Dining Hall 3rd Floor B Block	02		
8.	Block Basement – I	01	01	01
9.	Block Basement – II	01	01	01

10.	C Block	06	06	01
11.	D Block	09	13	04
12.	D Block Basement – II	01	01	01
13.	E Block	09	-	
14.	E Block Basement – I	01	01	01
15.	Outer Area – Porta Cabin Gate 1	02		
16.	Outer Area – Porta Cabin Gate 3	01		
	Total	**62**	**39**	**12**
	Total (A+B)	**30+62=92**	**39+04=43**	**02+12=14**

The results of the brief survey done on 04-07-2023 to 06-07-2023 reflecting average footfall of female users against the various locations of ladies' washrooms in both the Main Building and Additional Building Complex, are given below. Data based on footfall of female users has been divided into three categories viz, where average footfall is 25 or below, where average footfall of female users is between 75 and 100 and where average footfall exceeds 100.

Table-6: Survey of footfall

A: Average footfall below 25

S. No.	Location	Average Footfall
1.	E Block 3rd Floor	19
2.	E Block 3rd Floor	19

B: Average Footfall between 75 and 100

S. No.	Location	Average Footfall
1.	ABED Basement	75
2.	A Block Ground Floor	72

C: Average Footfall above 100

S. No.	Location	Average Footfall
1.	A Block 4th Floor	165
2.	A Block 5th Floor	119
3.	B Block Ground Floor	280
4.	B Block 1st Floor	192
5.	B Block 2nd Floor	192
6.	B Block 3rd Floor	171
7.	B Block 4th Floor	111
8.	B Block 5th Floor	180
9.	B Block 6th Floor	135
10.	B Block 7th Floor	163
11.	B Block 8th Floor	149
12.	C Block Ground Floor	209
13.	D Block 1st Floor	121
14.	E Block Ground Floor	113
15.	Porta Cabin Pass Counter back side	199
16.	New Building – 2 I & II Floor	380
17.	New Building Lift No. 7, Ground and Ist Floor	144
18.	CT Ground Floor Court 8,9	318
19.	Library 1 Floor Advocate Line	290
20.	Female Bar Washroom 1 Floor	386
21.	New Building-2 PwD Toilet Ground 1st, IInd Floor	168
22.	Court Master Line 2nd and 3rd Floor	317
23.	New Buildings-1 Lift No. 8 Ground, and 1st Floor	263
24.	Registrar Line 1st Floor	290
25.	1 to 12 Line Toilet 1st Floor	266
26.	Dispensary Line Ground Floor 1st Floor	309

- Comparatively, Block - B has high footfall, especially on the Ground Floor with 280 visitors, suggesting it is one of the busiest areas.
- New Building – 2 and the Female Bar Washroom on the 1st Floor have the highest footfalls of 380 and 386, respectively.
- The least footfall in this category is at the Block – E Ground Floor with 113, which is still substantial.
- There are several areas with footfalls exceeding 250, suggesting these are high-traffic areas.
- Given the significant footfall in areas such as B Block, New Building – 2, and the Female Bar Washroom on the 1st Floor, it is recommended that more ladies' washrooms be added or the existing ones be expanded to accommodate the high number of users. When planning additional blocks or facilities, the washroom-to-user ratio currently observed in the existing buildings should be factored in to avoid similar issues.

(b) Proximity to nearest drinking water facility

Table-7: Courtroom proximity to nearest drinking water facility

S.No.	Courtroom (CR)	Distance to Drinking Water Tap	Distance to Drinking Fountain Water
1.	CR1	68 ft	350 ft
2.	CR2	92 ft	370 ft
3.	CR3	100 ft	330 ft
4.	CR4	182 ft	305 ft
5.	CR5	39 ft	335 ft
6.	CR6	11 ft	452 ft
7.	CR7	12 ft	452 ft
8.	CR8	22 ft	50 ft
9.	CR9	22 ft	50 ft

10.	CR10	125 ft	115 ft
11.	CR11	125 ft	157 ft
12.	CR12	113 ft	214 ft
13.	CR13	68 ft	257 ft
14.	CR14	69 ft	340 ft
15.	CR15	56 ft	370 ft
16.	CR16	90 ft	15 ft
17.	CR17	56 ft	25ft

- Visitors cannot bring water bottles in courtrooms, to prevent their use as projectiles. The availability of drinking water facilities across the courtrooms displays varying distances. While CR6 and CR7 are close to a drinking water tap at just 11 ft and 12 ft, respectively, courtrooms like CR4, CR10, and CR11 are at a noticeable distance with 182 ft, 125 ft, and 125 ft away, respectively.

- Access to the drinking fountain water is especially notable for CR16 and CR17 with just 15 ft and 25 ft away. On the other hand, CR6 and CR7 are farthest, at 452 ft each. This indicates that while some courtrooms have excellent access to fountain water, others are at a notable disadvantage.

- These distances underscore the need for strategizing the positioning of essential facilities in relation to the courtrooms, keeping in mind the convenience of women lawyers, persons with disabilities, and senior citizens.

(c) Ladies Bar Room: The entrance of the room has a slope and the flooring is uneven. The washrooms are not wheelchair accessible.

(d) Elevator Proximity: The closeness of courtrooms to elevators is especially significant for pregnant women, persons with disabilities, and senior citizens, who might face difficulties traversing long pathways or using stairs. Data reflecting the distance to the nearest elevator from each of the courts is as follows:

Table-8: Courtroom proximity to elevator

Courtroom	Distance to elevator
CR1	80 ft
CR2	22 ft
CR3	45 ft
CR4	26 ft
CR5	27 ft
CR6	11 ft
CR7	11 ft
CR8	11 ft
CR9	11 ft
CR10	22 ft
CR11	135 ft
CR12	146 ft
CR13	74 ft
CR14	68 ft
CR15	79 ft
CR16	39 ft
CR17	68 ft

From the table, it can be observed that courtrooms like CR6 to CR9 offer the best accessibility, making them highly convenient for women, individuals with disabilities, and senior citizens. In contrast, CR11 and CR12 pose challenges due to their significant distance from the elevators.

For women who are pregnant, these distances can pose unique challenges. Persons with disabilities, especially those with mobility challenges, would find courtrooms like CR11 and CR12 almost inaccessible without assistance. Similarly, senior citizens, particularly those with health issues, might find it cumbersome to

access courtrooms with distances exceeding 50 ft without adequate rest stops or assistance.

(e) Creche Facility: The creche in the main Supreme Court premises is being utilized by parents with children. Discussions with a practicing advocate and a registry member mirrored trust, security, and satisfaction with the facility. The advocate, a mother of two, lauded the secured environment, expressing complete trust in the facility; sentiments which were echoed by the registry member as well. The creche was clean and well-maintained, with CCTV cameras for security and children's activities in progress.

Challenges and Suggestions:

The principal challenge identified is the lack of awareness among potential stakeholders about the availability of the creche. Women with infants and their family members should be able to easily locate and access the creche independently. To address this gap, the following may be considered:

- **Enhanced Notification:** The SuSwagatam portal should be enhanced to feature creche options prominently, allowing stakeholders to learn about the availability of these facilities.
- **Communication:** To augment awareness, stakeholders visiting the Supreme Court should receive notifications regarding the creche facility through SMS and email, ensuring widespread knowledge about this facility available for parents with children.
- **Guided Navigation:** Implementing a guided map to the creche in the e-Pass software can offer real-time assistance to visitors, making the navigation to the creche straightforward and user-friendly.
- **Facility in Additional Building Complex:** Given that most employees operate within the Additional Building Complex, the establishment of a creche facility in this area would be instrumental. The presence of a creche within close proximity would significantly enhance the work-life balance for female

employees in the Additional Building Complex, reducing the time and effort required to access the childcare facility.

(f) Lactation Rooms: To advance gender inclusivity in the Supreme Court, the immediate establishment of adequately equipped lactation rooms is imperative. These facilities will address the fundamental needs of breastfeeding mothers, affording them privacy, comfort, and the required amenities. The rooms should serve as dedicated, private spaces, upholding strict standards of hygiene and offering essential amenities like seating, a table, electrical outlets, a refrigerator for milk storage, and a sink. The beneficiaries of these enhancements would include women advocates, advocate clerks, registry staff, female litigants, and visitors to the Mediation and Conciliation Center of the Supreme Court, who are nursing mothers. Furthermore, the Supreme Court of India should incorporate these lactation rooms alongside special waiting areas for women to cultivate a holistic and gender-inclusive environment.

(g) Changing Rooms: A significant number of women suggested the establishment of dedicated changing rooms exclusively for women.

PART III

2.5 Views from Employees with disabilities

In Part I of Chapter 2, the physical audit sheds light on several accessibility gaps within the Supreme Court premises and suggestions to plug those gaps. While these findings provide a foundational understanding of the issues at hand, the lived experiences of those directly impacted offer an irreplaceable perspective. This section pivots on the feedback of the employees with disabilities of the Supreme Court who navigate these spaces daily. There are 15 such employees in the organization, with 9 being male employees and 6 being female employees. These individuals have various types of disabilities, including:

- **Locomotor Disability:** 10 of them have a locomotor disability.
- **Disability in hand:** There are 3 employees with a disability in their hand.

- **Amputation of arm:** 1 male employee has experienced an amputation of the right arm.
- **Visually Impaired:** 1 female employee is visually impaired.

Locomotor challenges are the most common impairment among these employees. This may underscore the importance of addressing mobility challenges in the Supreme Court premises. There are employees with challenges in hand, amputation of one arm, and visual impairment. Their insights, drawn from day-to-day interactions with the infrastructure, bring a personal dimension that complements the findings of the physical audit. By combining audit results and employee feedback, we aim to present a holistic understanding of the accessibility challenges faced and the necessary actions required. The views of the employees with disabilities are as follows:

(a) Accessibility of Supreme Court Premises

- Certain entry passages to the Main Building and Additional Building Complex may be reserved for individuals with disabilities.
- The drainage gullies at the edges of the roads present navigation challenges for individuals with disabilities and need appropriate covering or other alterations.
- The steepness of the UCO Bank ramp poses difficulties for wheelchair users.
- Provision of Personal Assistance or Battery-operated vehicles between the Old Building and the New ABC Building would substantially reduce commute time for individuals with disabilities.
- The absence of ramps at the Outer Entry gate in the Supreme Court buildings restricts smooth access.
- Tactile paving must be devoid of obstructions, be it parked vehicles, flowerpots, or signboards.
- GPS marking throughout the Supreme Court premises would significantly ease location and movement.
- Installation of handrails, especially in areas like the Supreme Court dispensary, will facilitate safer movement.

- Dedicated attendants could aid in personal yet essential tasks such as UCO bank dealings, administrative tasks, dispensary visits, and more.
- Appropriate hooks are required for hanging crutches and other personal items.
- Special training for the Registry staff is necessary to foster a more understanding and considerate environment for individuals with disabilities.
- Dedicated parking spaces are essential for individuals with disabilities.

(b) Suggestions for Washrooms

- Emergency provisions like panic buttons are crucial for safety.
- Washroom fixtures, like hand dryers and mirrors, need to be wheelchair-friendly.
- The proximity of washrooms to workplaces can drastically reduce the effort for individuals with disabilities.
- Enhanced facilities like additional slab space and hooks, are required in washrooms for individuals with disabilities.
- More spacious hooks can accommodate crutches, bags, and similar items.

(c) Drinking Water Facilities

Despite several water outlets, employees with disabilities resort to bringing water from home due to:

- Distant locations of drinking water taps and fountains.
- Unfriendly tap heights, particularly in the ABC Building.
- Lack of facilities, like hooks, near drinking stations.
- Lack of automatic drinking water taps for easier operation.

(d) Assistance from Colleagues

- Although colleagues often extend help, empowering PWDs to be self-reliant upholds their dignity.

(e) Facilities/Tools to Navigate the Supreme Court Premises

- Battery-operated vehicles would be beneficial.

- Navigation can be eased with guides or escorts.
- Special queues for persons with disabilities at pivotal service points will reduce wait times.
- Extending public transport access up to the low-security zone can be transformative.

PART IV

2.6 Highlights from the Data Collected through Questionnaires

The following are highlights from the data collected through the two questionnaires, which were circulated through the Supreme Court website and also on the websites of High Courts.[2]

The first questionnaire was on accessibility. It contained 27 questions and was filled by 140 respondents. Among the total received, 26 were transgender persons, 21 were female, and 93 were male respondents. It was majorly filled by PwDs. Among the 140 respondents, 25 were able-bodied persons. Among respondents with disabilities, 39 had visual impairment, 27 had a locomotor disability, and 37 opted 'any other' disability. An important finding is that 38 believed that the physical infrastructure of the Supreme Court was not at all friendly, 34 found it somewhat friendly, 42 found it very friendly, and 26 did not answer the question. It can be deduced that half of the respondents believed that the Supreme Court could be made more accessible for PwDs. There was no correlation identified between the disability of a person and the perception about disabled-friendliness of the Supreme Court.

Access to courtrooms, in particular, is critical. To understand if people found reaching court rooms accessible, the questionnaire asked: *Did you face any challenges while trying to reach the desired courtroom?* 103 responses were received to this question. We find that 62 did face challenges, whereas 41 did not. The subsequent question asked them the capacity in which they had an interface with the Supreme Court. The data from this question established that lawyers are most affected

[2] Website of the Supreme Court, available at: https://main.sci.nic.in/sci_accessibility/.

by inaccessibility, followed by visitors. The breakdown of those affected by inaccessibility is as follows: court journalists (4), court staff (14), judicial officers (9), law clerks (8), lawyers (29), legal interns (8), legal researchers (5), litigants (11), and visitors (22).

The second questionnaire was for disability rights experts, containing 14 questions to which we received 19 responses. The respondent experts gave suggestions on making different facets of the infrastructure of the court accessible. The suggestions received through these questionnaires are summarised as below:

Infrastructure:

- Implementation of ramps, escalators, and stairs with hand railings and tactile warning strips is essential.
- Separate pathways for persons with disabilities are suggested for ease of movement.
- Smooth, accessible pathways and vehicles from the main gates till courtrooms are crucial.
- More clearance in navigating space and proper arrangement of seats for persons with disabilities are suggested.

Communication and Signage:

- Inclusion of sign language, and braille signs/markers is essential.
- Large font boards, tactile elements in the building, and speaking systems are recommended for effective navigation.

Facilities:

- Washrooms, cafeterias, and drinking water facilities should be made accessible to persons with disabilities.
- All facilities should have clear, accessible signage, including information in braille and tactile pathways.

Parking:

- Reserved parking spots are essential for persons with disabilities, ensuring they are used by the right individuals.

Washrooms:

- Accessible toilets, handrails, and staff support are essential for persons with disabilities.
- Provision of speaking systems and signage in braille and tactile pathways is suggested to facilitate persons with visual impairments.

Website:

- Remediation of accessibility issues with Captchas and calendar options is crucial.
- Listings and hyperlinks should be accessible to the visually challenged, and document submissions and uploads should be user-friendly.
- Scanning documents with OCR for better readability.

Sensitization and Special Counters:

- Sensitization of court staff, lawyers, and judges is crucial.
- Special counters for persons with disabilities are recommended until all accessibility concerns are fully implemented.

Other Facilities:

- Court staff should assist in navigating court premises, and clear sign boards indicating courtroom locations are essential.
- Provision of written display systems, live transcripts, and sign language interpreters are recommended for persons with hearing impairments.

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Chapter 3

Functional Accessibility

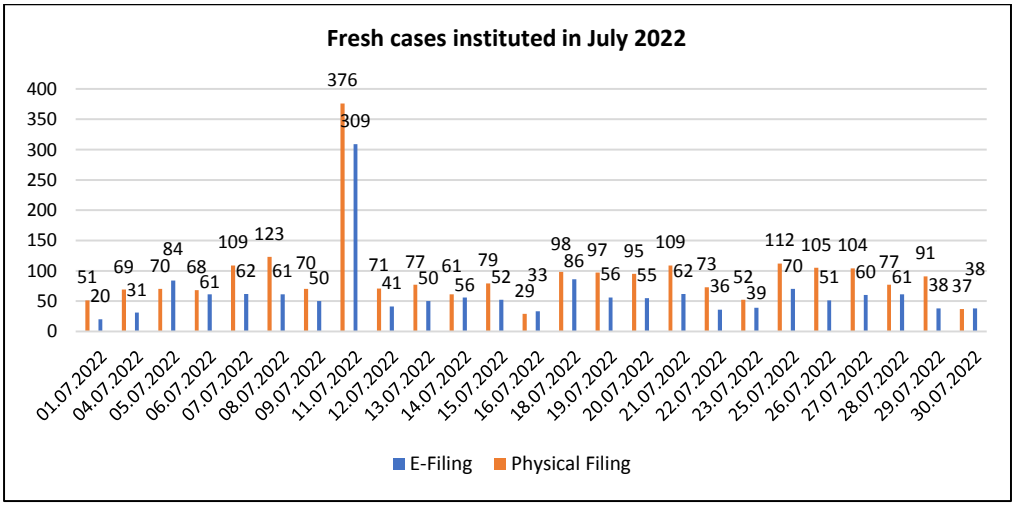
This chapter delves into the intricacies of functional accessibility within the Supreme Court of India. A detailed analysis of the court's operational practices reveals areas that pose challenges. Essential processes such as filing of petitions/documents, mentioning of matters, and the workings of the Mediation Centre are evaluated in relation to functional accessibility. In addition, the court's digital platforms have been assessed to determine their ability to cater to persons with disabilities. The procedures associated with issuing entry passes to the Supreme Court have been examined.

While a significant emphasis is placed on catering to people with disabilities, the specific needs of women and senior citizens receive dedicated attention. This review not only highlights potential problem areas but also suggests actionable steps for improvement. The aim is to provide a roadmap that bolsters the court's functional accessibility, ensuring a more inclusive judicial experience.

3.1 Framework at Filing Counters

Filing counters serve as vital touchpoints in the operational workflow, facilitating the submission of fresh matters, miscellaneous documents, caveats, and other essential filings. Although each visitor might file more than one matter at a time, the number of physical filings can be seen as an indicator of the traffic these counters experience. For instance, in 2022, the fresh filing counter recorded as many as 24,215 physical filings of fresh matters. On certain peak days, this number even soared to 376. Similarly, the miscellaneous counter witnessed about 56,863 filings for rejoinders and other documents in the same year, with the highest single-day filing touching 414. Graphs reflecting the per-day data of physical filings (Fresh cases) in July 2022 and June 2023 further substantiate these observations.

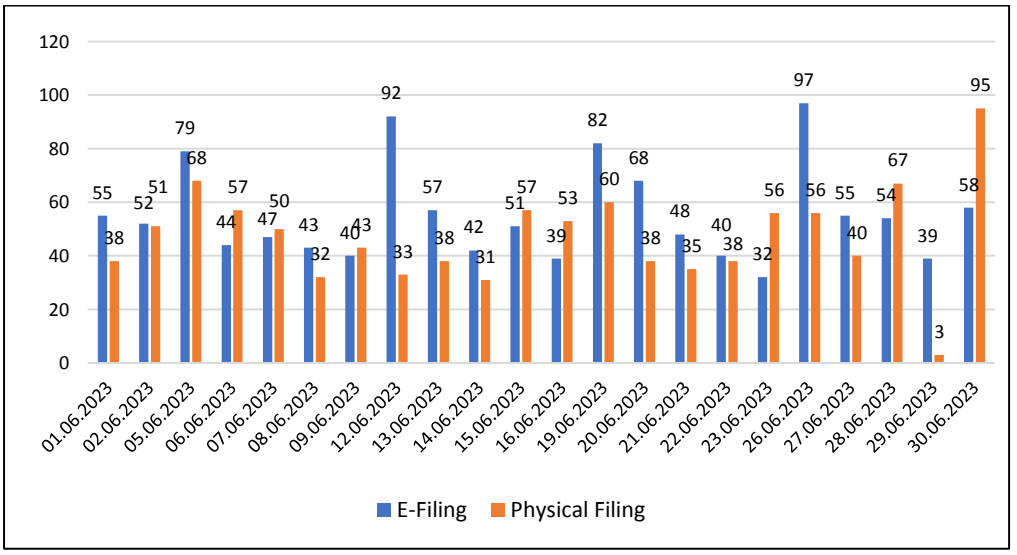
Chart-1



- The majority of case filings were made through physical mode, with 2303 filings (59.6% of the total) compared to 1563 filings through e-filing mode (40.4% of the total). In a single day (11/07/2022), physical fillings went up to 376.

Chart-2

Fresh cases instituted in June 2023



The majority of case filings were made through e-filing, with 1297 filings (53.81% of the total) compared to 1114 filings through physical filing (46.19% of the total). However, in a single day (30.06.2023), physical filings went up to 95.

A close examination of these counters – which involved actual visits and not just a perusal of data – laid bare certain gaps in functional accessibility which are mentioned in the following paragraphs:

i. **Fresh Filing Counter:** The fresh filing counter is equipped with seven windows. On a typical day, three to four of these windows are operational, depending upon the work. Officials posted at the windows process physically filed matters as well as e-filed matters. While there is a dedicated window for women, there is an absence of exclusive service points for senior citizens and persons with disabilities. Given the volume of visitors, it is imperative to ensure sufficient space. Moreover, the provision of designated spaces for persons with disabilities, and senior citizens becomes paramount. There are no seating arrangements for pregnant women and elderly visitors.

ii. **Miscellaneous Filing Counter:** The miscellaneous counter has six windows. Despite the considerable traffic, there is no separate window for persons with disabilities or senior citizens. Moreover, there is an absence of seating arrangements for pregnant women and elderly visitors.

iii. **Gaps and Suggestions:** While the counters are indispensable, the observed gaps in the service framework can pose challenges to certain groups. Addressing these concerns is not just about enhancing the user experience but also about ensuring inclusivity and accessibility. Suggestions to bridge these gaps and enhance the functional accessibility of the counters have been provided in the following table.

S.No.	Counters	Gaps	Suggestions
1.	Caveat Counter	Two windows. No separate window or facility for persons with disabilities, women, or senior citizens. This can lead to discomfort for these groups.	Introduce a dedicated window or service point at the caveat counter specifically for persons with disabilities, women, and senior citizens. This will ensure quicker and more efficient service for these groups. Introduce at least 2-3 dedicated seats near the caveat counter specifically for persons with disabilities, pregnant women, and senior citizens. Clear signage should indicate the reservation of these seats.
2.	Fresh/ Miscellaneous Counters	While there is a window for women, there is no dedicated window for persons with disabilities. This can pose accessibility challenges for those with mobility issues, visual or hearing impairments. No separate seating for persons with disabilities, pregnant women, or senior citizens.	Introduce a separate window or service point for persons with disabilities. This will ensure that individuals with special needs can access services without any undue wait or discomfort. Allocate 2-3 seats near each counter exclusively for persons with disabilities, women, and senior citizens. Using clear signage or distinct seat colors can help identify these reserved seats.
3.	Petitioner in Person Counter	Seating facilities are present but not reserved for special groups.	Ensure at least one/two of the available seats are reserved for persons with disabilities, women, and senior citizens. As the seating capacity is limited, consider adding 1-2 more seats to accommodate these groups without affecting the general visitors.

iv. **Lack of training:** During interaction with staff, it was quite noticeable that staff at the counters lacked adequate training to assist persons with disabilities, women who are pregnant, and senior citizens. It seemed that the staff has not received training with regard to the unique needs and challenges faced by these individuals and were unsure about the best practices to address them. Such inadequacies can result in unintentional mistakes, further complicating or hampering the visitor experience for these groups. There is a need to introduce training programs that empower staff with the necessary knowledge and skills to serve these individuals effectively.

v. **No sign interpreter for hard of hearing and speech impaired:** A deficiency observed at the filing counters is the absence of sign interpreters for individuals who are hard of hearing or speech-impaired. Without adequate support, these individuals may face challenges in comprehending the procedures, which can lead to misunderstandings, oversights, and errors.

3.2 Updates of processing of fresh matters

The matters are instituted in the Supreme Court of India through physical as well as E-filing modes. Upon institution, the matter proceeds through various stages in Section 1B to confirm adherence to the Supreme Court Rules, practice, and procedure. The processing framework for fresh matters in the Supreme Court consists of different stages, each with a specific purpose. The Supreme Court's current system intermittently updates the progress of cases. This approach can disadvantage specific groups: individuals with disabilities, women lawyers/litigants, and senior citizens.

Table-9: Updates of processing of fresh matters

S.No.	Process	Updates Provided
1.	Generation of Diary No.	Via SMS
2.	Details from Lower Court, police station, FIR, similarity checks, and linking caveats	None

3.	Scrutiny	Defect notifications Via SMS
4.	Sending physically filed matters to refiling counters	No SMS updates
5.	Registration	Via SMS
6.	Opening and segregating files	None
7.	Paper book preparation (for e-filed matters)	None
8.	Checking e-filed paper books	None
9.	Collecting soft copies (for physically filed matters) and email comparison with hard copies	Via email
10.	Extracting categories, marking for tagging, and caveat checks	None
11.	Verification and tagging based on similarities	Via SMS

(a) Challenges:

- **Physical Mobility:** Individuals with disabilities may face challenges navigating registry offices to get updates about the progress of their freshly instituted cases.
- **Women lawyers**: Women lawyers/litigants, during pregnancy, might face challenges in frequent visits to registry.
- **Physical Strain:** Senior citizens might experience fatigue or health challenges in making repeated visits to the registry.

(b) Suggestions:

- **Comprehensive SMS Notifications**: Expand the existing SMS notification system to provide updates at every stage of case processing.

- **Dedicated Online Portal:** Provide real-time case status checks through the online portal, ensuring user-friendliness and accessibility.
- **Email Notifications**: Offer the option of receiving stage-by-stage updates via email.
- **Special Consideration Desks**: Establish dedicated help desks or counters in the registry for individuals with disabilities, women lawyers/litigants, and senior citizens.
- **Personalized Assistance:** Offer a service for updates through a dedicated helpline or assistance desk.

3.3 Refiling Counter

(a) Challenges

The refiling process, during the course of processing of physically filed matters, is cumbersome and physically taxing for individuals with disabilities, pregnant women and senior citizens. After the notification of defects in the initial filings, paper books are sent to the refiling counter. On average 175 matters are sent to the refiling counter daily. This requires individuals to physically collect these documents and then refile them at the counter itself. This process poses several challenges to these people:

- **Physical Exertion:** The need to visit the counter multiple times can be physically exhausting.
- **Lack of Assistance/Lack of Dedicated Window:** Individuals with disabilities, pregnant women, and senior citizens might require assistance in handling bulky or heavy paper books, which is not readily available. Moreover, there is no separate window for them at the refiling counter.

(b) Suggestions:

- **Dedicated Counters:** Introduce exclusive counters at the refiling section for Individuals with disabilities, and senior citizens. These counters should ensure quicker processing times and reduced wait periods.

- **Assistance Services:** Deploy personnel specifically trained to assist individuals in handling and refiling their paper books, ensuring that those who need assistance receive it promptly.
- **Clear Communication:** Ensure that the defects are communicated clearly the first time around, reducing the need for multiple visits.
- **Seating Arrangements:** There's a need for designated spots specifically for persons with disabilities, women, and senior citizens to ensure their comfort and priority.
- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Establish a system where individuals can provide feedback on their refiling experience. This continuous feedback can offer insights into further areas of improvement.

3.4 Courtroom Accessibility

Functional accessibility within courtrooms presents a myriad of challenges. In the Supreme Court, there are 17 courtrooms, and on miscellaneous days such as Monday, Tuesday, and Friday, approximately 40-65 cases are listed before each court. The seating capacity survey of the courts revealed the following:

Table-10: Seating capacity in court rooms

Courtroom No.	Available Seating	Seating Type (Inside)	Reserved Seating for persons with disabilities	Reserved Seating for Women	Reserved Seating for Senior Citizens
CR 1	Yes	Chair (80)	No	No	No
CR 2	Yes	Chair (46) and Bench (3X4)	No	No	No
CR 3	Yes	Chair (35) and Bench (3X4)	No	No	No
CR 4	Yes	Chair (26) and Bench (3X4)	No	No	No

CR 5	Yes	Chair (35)	No	No	No
CR 6	Yes	Chair (36) and Bench (2x4)	No	No	No
CR 7	Yes	Chair (36) and Bench (2X4)	No	No	No
CR 8	Yes	Chair (35) and Bench (2X4)	No	No	No
CR 9	Yes	Chair (34) and Bench (2X4)	No	No	No
CR 10	Yes	Chair (26) and Bench (3X4)	No	No	No
CR 11	Yes	Chair (26) and Bench (3X4) (1x2)	No	No	No
CR 12	Yes	Chair (28) and Bench (3X4) (1x2)	No	No	No
CR 13	Yes	Chair (23) and Bench (2X4)	No	No	No
CR 14	Yes	Chair (25) and Bench (1X4)	No	No	No
CR 15	Yes	Chair (23) and Bench (1X4) (1x2)	No	No	No
CR 16	Yes	Chair (29) and Bench (5X4)	No	No	No
CR 17	Yes	Chair (28) and Bench (4X4) (1x2)	No	No	No

Total seating capacity across all courtrooms is around **735**.

Data reflecting the cases listed in courts is as follows:

Table-11: Listing of cases

Listing Date	Days	Misc. matters	Regular matters	Total cases listed
01.08.2023	Tuesday	1165	0	1165
02.08.2023	Wednesday	196	822	1018
03.08.2023	Thursday	85	541	626
04.08.2023	Friday	1098	0	1098
07.08.2023	Monday	1550	0	1550
08.08.2023	Tuesday	1126	0	1126
09.08.2023	Wednesday	168	669	837
10.08.2023	Thursday	81	480	561
11.08.2023	Friday	1215	0	1215

For each of these cases, it is not just the main counsel that attend; they are often accompanied by their juniors colleagues, and also their registered clerks. Thus, for every case listed, there is an average of three or four individuals representing it inside the courtroom. This quickly leads to a crowded environment, underscoring the importance of considering functional accessibility in such settings. If each case represents an average of 3 to 4 individuals (considering the main counsel and those assisting them), and assuming that one lawyer is appearing on an average in 4 cases then also there is overflow as compared to the total seating capacity. The following table reflects the total number of lawyers who entered the Supreme Court on various dates by using their proximity cards.

Table-12: Entry through proximity cards

S. No.	Date	Day	Number of lawyers that visited
1.	01.08.2023	Tuesday	1896
2.	02.08.2023	Wednesday	1515
3.	03.08.2023	Thursday	1175
4.	04.08.2023	Friday	1985
5.	07.08.2023	Monday	1959
6.	08.08.2023	Tuesday	1865
7.	09.08.2023	Wednesday	1564
8.	10.08.2023	Thursday	1317
9.	11.08.2023	Friday	1815

Navigating through the congested courtrooms becomes particularly challenging for visually impaired individuals, individuals with mobility challenges, pregnant women lawyers, and senior citizens. The bustling environment, compounded by the limited space, makes it difficult for them to move safely and comfortably. The congestion in courtrooms poses distinct risks for women lawyers who are expecting. This challenge was starkly brought to light when a female lawyer, nearly 7.5 months pregnant, almost suffered a mishap in a jam-packed courtroom. On a particularly busy day, the courtroom was packed with advocates, litigants, and advocates' clerks. While navigating through the crowd, a male lawyer, in a hurry to present his case, inadvertently pushed her, causing her to almost fall. The event highlighted the inherent dangers and, realizing the risks, she decided to halt her in-person appearances. Fortunately, video conferencing technology ensured she could continue her practice without being on-site. This incident clearly illustrates the safety hazards that crowded spaces can present to any pregnant woman. It is evident that

many court facilities are not designed with the specific needs of expecting mothers in mind. To address this, modifications in court infrastructure, such as designated seating, unobstructed paths, and safety protocols during high-traffic times, should be considered to make them more accommodating for pregnant women, persons with disabilities and senior citizens.

Challenges and suggestions for enhancing functional accessibility inside the courtrooms are as follows:

(i) Advocates/petitioners in person with disabilities

(a) Challenges:

- Visually impaired lawyers/petitioners in person face difficulty understanding printed documents referred to by other parties during arguments.
- Navigational challenges within the courtroom.
- Incomprehension of spoken arguments, in case of individuals with hearing impairments.
- Communication barriers during proceedings in case of individuals with hearing and speech impairments.

(b) Suggestions:

- Instant Audio Description: Employ dedicated personnel or technology to promptly read out or provide an audio description of any document being referenced.
- Digital Document Access: Ensure all court documents are available in an electronic format, compatible with screen readers. In cases involving stakeholders with disabilities, there should be an option to request that all documents in that case must be accessible. An application, called an 'accessibility application', can be moved to the court registry for this purpose. The registry can then direct its officials and the opposite side to ensure the same. Further, the documents shall lie in defect if they are not made available in an accessible format. The same is essential for this suggestion to be practically implemented. Otherwise, PwDs will have to run from pillar to post to obtain

accessible documents and the amount of time that this will take will be so large that this facility will lose its purpose and will place such lawyers at a disadvantage vis-a-vis their able-bodied counterparts. If, however, a registry officer and the opposite side know that such documents will lie in defect unless they are made accessible, they will take expeditious steps to do the needful. If, in a given case, accessible documents are not made available, a grievance redressal mechanism needs to be set up. Every document that is filed in court needs to be OCR (Optical character recognition) friendly, with 300 dots per inch, to enable visually challenged persons to access such documents.

- Reserved seats for individuals with disabilities, and human assistance to visually impaired individuals for navigation inside the court room.
- Sign Language Interpreters: Engage interpreters to translate spoken content into sign language in real-time.
- Assistive Listening Devices: Distribute devices that amplify sound, reducing background noise.

(ii) Pregnant advocate/petitioner in person:

(a) Challenges:

- Navigating through crowded courtrooms.

(b) Suggestions:

- Priority Seating: Allocate front-row or easily accessible seating for pregnant women lawyer/petitioner in person.

(iii) Senior Citizens:

(a) Challenges:

- Struggling with audibility in crowded courtrooms.
- Navigating through crowded courtrooms.

(b) Suggestions:

- Personalized Sound Amplification: Make available sound amplification devices to counteract ambient noise.

- Document Enhancement Tools: Make handheld magnifying glasses or electronic magnifiers available for easier document reading.
- Priority Seating: Allocate front-row or easily accessible seating for senior citizens.

3.5 Digital and IT framework

The Supreme Court of India has embraced technological advancements in order to enhance its services to the public and maintain efficient administrative functions. The Court's IT infrastructure can be classified into public and private services based on the target user groups. The following paragraphs provide the types of IT services and evaluation of the functional accessibility of these services and identify potential areas of improvement:

(a) Public IT Services:

The Supreme Court provides a range of public IT services that aim to facilitate ease of access to court proceedings, information, and resources. These services include:

- **Website:** The primary digital portal that provides information, notifications, case status/orders/judgements, and other resources related to the Supreme Court.
- **Mobile App:** A mobile-friendly platform offering access to court services and information on-the-go.
- **Electronic filing:** Enables stakeholders to submit petitions etc. online, reducing the need for physical submissions.
- **Digitized paper-books:** Conversion of traditional paper-based court records into electronic format for easy access and storage.
- **eCopying for certified copy**: Digital service that allows users to obtain certified copies of court documents electronically.
- **Electronic Supreme Court Reports (e-SCR)**: Digital reports containing judgements and decisions of the Supreme Court.

- **Advocates Appearance Portal**: A dedicated portal for advocates to mark their appearances in cases.
- **Online RTI portal**: A platform for the public to file requests under the Right to Information Act, 2005, for information pertaining to the Supreme Court.
- **Entry/Exit pass software**: Digital system for managing and tracking entry and exit passes for the Supreme Court premises.
- **Video Conferencing**: Used for hybrid hearings, work meetings, and functions, allowing remote participation.
- **Live streaming**: Broadcasts Constitution Bench cases in real-time.
- **Automated email and SMS services**: Notification system to keep stakeholders informed about case status, hearings, and other updates.

(b) Private IT Services:

For its employees and stakeholders, the Supreme Court has

- **Integrated Case Management Information System**: Software to manage and track cases from initiation to conclusion.
- **Attendance software**: Digital platform for marking and tracking employee attendance.
- **Email services by NIC**: Official email services provided by the National Informatics Centre for the Court's internal/external communication.
- **Automated email and SMS services**: For notifications and updates.
- **Computer applications and software**: Standard office suite tools for documentation, presentations, and data management.
- **Library reference resources**: Digital resources for legal research and reference.
- **IT hardware**: Physical devices like desktops, laptops, printers, and scanners used for day-to-day operations.

- **VOIP telephony**: Voice Over Internet Protocol services for telecommunication.

(c) Challenges and Suggestions:

The challenges faced in each area and the corresponding suggestions to address them are as follows:

1. Website

Challenges:

- Lack of alternative text hinders the visually impaired.
- Absence of sign language or transcripts for any audio or video content affects those who cannot hear.
- Lack of easy-to-read content or voice-over features can challenge senior citizens.
- Lack of dedicated page for persons with disabilities.

Suggestions:

- Implement alternative text for every image and visual element for the visually impaired.
- Provide sign language interpretations or transcripts for audio and video content.
- Introduce voice-over features or large font options for senior citizens.
- Design clear, simple navigation structures to assist senior citizens.

2. Mobile App

Challenges:

- Potential incompatibility with screen readers affects the visually impaired.
- Lack of vibration or visual alerts can be challenging for those who cannot hear.

Suggestions:

- Ensure the app is fully compatible with screen readers.
- Introduce vibration or visual-based alerts as alternatives to audio notifications.
- Implement easy-to-read fonts and voice command features for senior citizens.

3. Electronic Filing

Challenges:

- Inadequate guidance can be daunting for senior citizens unfamiliar with digital systems.
- Absence of voice command features can hinder the visually impaired.

Suggestions:

- Develop detailed, easy-to-follow tutorials, possibly with video guides using sign language.
- Implement voice-command functionalities to aid the visually impaired.
- Design a simplified version or guided walkthrough for senior citizens.

4. Other IT Services (eSCR, Advocates Appearance Portal, Online RTI Portal, etc.)

Challenges:

- Potential incompatibility with assistive technologies.
- Absence of clear instructions or guidance can be confusing for senior citizens.

Suggestions:

- Ensure all platforms are compatible with popular assistive technologies like screen readers or voice command software.
- Offer tutorials or step-by-step guides, with versions in sign language and with large, readable fonts.
- Consider introducing chat support or helplines, with options for text-based communication for those who cannot speak.

5. General Suggestions for All IT Services:

- Design should prioritize clear contrasts and large fonts to aid the visually impaired and senior citizens.
- Introduce alternative navigation methods, like voice commands or easy-to-click buttons for those with motor disabilities.
- Ensure all video content has sign language interpretation options.
- Regular feedback mechanisms should be introduced, specifically targeting these user groups to understand and address their unique challenges.
- Tailoring the IT services of the Supreme Court with these specific groups in mind, will ensure a more inclusive and user-friendly experience for all.

3.6 Display Boards

(a) Challenges:

Within the court's confines, display boards are strategically positioned in various corridors and areas. These boards are indispensable for lawyers and relevant parties, as they display the serial numbers of cases being heard in different courts. The display board is also available on the Supreme Court website. The display boards within the court premises solely present the serial numbers of the cases. They neither provide audio output nor feature braille. Without an integrated audio system, these boards fail to accommodate the needs of the visually impaired, leaving them dependent on external help or at risk of missing information displayed on boards.

(b) Suggestions:

- Audio Descriptive Kiosks: Introduce kiosks nearby that can audibly present the board's content upon user request.
- Smartphone Application: Provide real-time audio descriptions and notifications of updates from the boards through app.

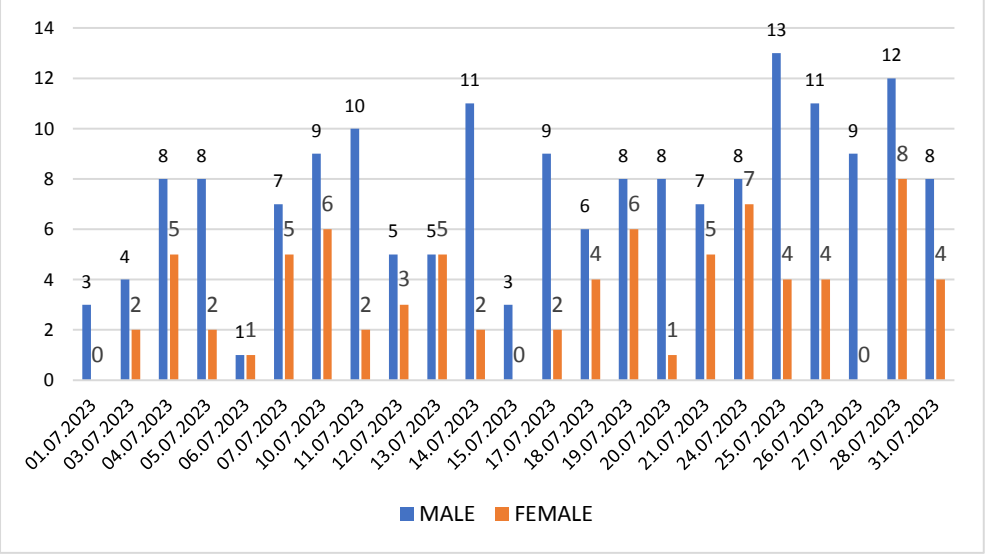
- Given the importance of the display boards in keeping lawyers informed about case progress and scheduling, ensuring accessibility in all areas, including the women's bar rooms, is paramount.

3.7 Front office of Supreme Court Legal Aid Committee

Situated in the main building of the Supreme Court, the Front Office of the Supreme Court Legal Services Committee is a crucial point for those seeking legal advice and assistance. The Front Office receives an approximate daily traffic of around ten individuals. Notably, a segment of these daily visitors comprises women. This is reflected in the data relating to the visitors. Data for the month of July 2023 is depicted below:

Chart-3

Visitors in Front Office in July 2023



(a) Identified Functional Accessibility Issues:

- **Lack of Sign Interpreter:** The absence of a sign interpreter can make communication challenging for the hearing-impaired.

- **Provisions for Visually impaired persons:** There is a discernible absence of tailored provisions for visually impaired visitors.
- **Lack of training:** There seems to be a lack of training of staff trained specifically in assisting visually impaired visitors.
- **Lack of Audio Descriptive Tools:** Audio tools or systems that can guide or provide information audibly to visually impaired visitors are notably absent.

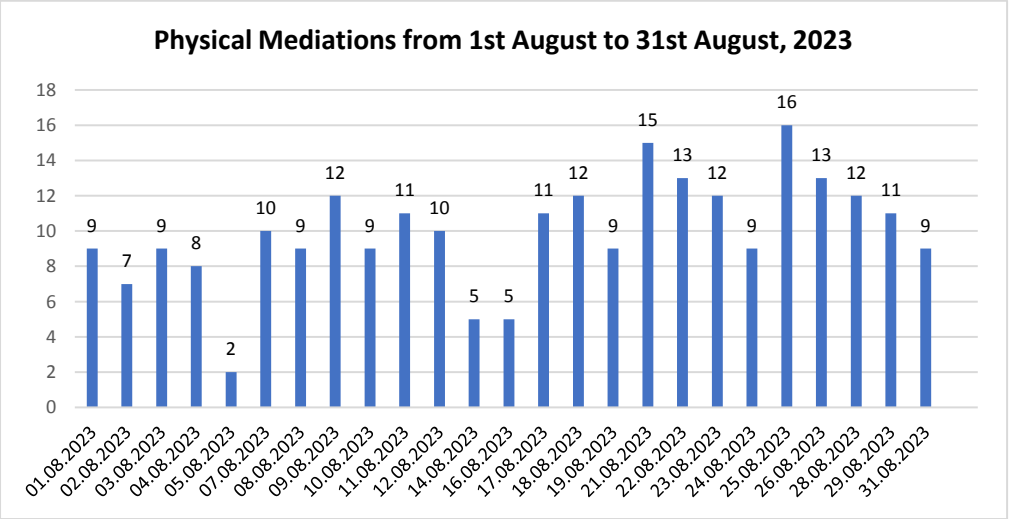
(b) Suggestions:

- **Appoint a Sign Interpreter:** A trained sign language interpreter can facilitate effective communication for visitors with hearing impairments.
- **Staff Training:** Conduct regular training sessions for staff to educate them about the needs of individuals with disabilities and how best to assist them.
- **Prioritize Pregnant Women/Senior Citizens:** Introduce a system to offer prior slot allocations for pregnant women/senior citizens, ensuring they do not have to wait for extended periods.
- **Maintain Comprehensive Records:** Begin documenting visits by individuals with disabilities to better understand their needs and frequency of visits.

3.8 Mediation Centre

The Supreme Court Mediation Centre, as an essential avenue for alternative dispute resolution, should exemplify the principles of inclusivity and accessibility. The Mediation Centre has nine mediation cabins, a waiting room that can seat up to 51 individuals, and a dedicated reception area. While the chamber is adept at facilitating both physical and virtual mediations, on any typical day, about 8 to 10 mediation sessions are conducted physically. Each of these sessions witnesses the participation of an average of 4 to 5 individuals. The data for the month of August, 2023, reflecting physical mediations, is given in the chart below:

Chart-4



Hence, even on an average day, the seating capacity of the waiting area is exceeded slightly. This can be easily inferred from the data. In the month of August, the Supreme Court Mediation Centre witnessed a total of 248 matters that were processed for mediation. Considering that mediation sessions were scheduled 24 days throughout the month, the average number of mediation matters addressed each day stands at approximately 10.33. To contextualize this data in terms of attendees, considering the minimum number of individuals involved in a single mediation session on an average is five, this leads to an average daily presence of around 52 people (when rounding up from 51.65). Given this consistent influx of attendees, it would be prudent to reserve specific seating for individuals with disabilities, pregnant women, and senior citizens, ensuring that the Centre is accommodating and accessible to all, especially those who might need additional assistance or comfort.

Individuals with disabilities, pregnant women, and senior citizens, even in the presence of virtual mediation options, may have reasons to participate in person. Yet, the absence of clear protocols and provisions may hamper their full and equal participation. This section delves into these functional accessibility challenges, underscoring the importance of a holistic approach to inclusivity.

Challenges:

(a) Intimation Protocol for the Visually Impaired:

- Currently, there is no defined protocol detailing how visually impaired individuals will be informed about the date and time of their mediation.
- There is also an absence of trained attendants to assist them in reaching the mediation centre. This poses a significant challenge, as these individuals might face difficulties navigating the premises without assistance.

(b) Lack of Support for Individuals with Hearing and Speech Impairments:

- The Mediation Centre lacks a systematic protocol for individuals who are hard of hearing or speech-impaired.
- There is no panel of sign interpreters. Communication is vital during mediation. The absence of interpreters can lead to misunderstandings, which can be detrimental to the mediation process.

(c) Inclusivity for Persons with Disabilities (mobility challenges) or Elderly Mediators/Visitors:

- The concerns are not limited to the parties involved in mediation. Even mediators, who might be having disabilities or elderly with walking difficulties, face challenges.
- Without protocols or facilities in place, these mediators might find it challenging to execute their duties effectively.

Suggestions:

a. Intimation Protocol for the Visually Impaired:

- **Structured Notification System:** Implement a multi-modal notification system that includes email, SMS, and automated voice calls. This would allow visually impaired individuals to receive timely updates about their mediation sessions.

- **Assistance on Arrival:** Designate and train staff members to assist visually impaired visitors. These individuals can guide the visually impaired from the entrance to the mediation chamber, ensuring their safe and hassle-free navigation.

- **Braille and Audio Instructions:** Provide braille printed schedules, maps, and other necessary information. Additionally, consider having audio instructions available at key points within the premises.

b. Support for Individuals with Hearing and Speech Impairments:

- **Sign Language Interpreters:** Establish a panel of certified sign language interpreters who can be present during mediations. This ensures that those with hearing and speech impairments can communicate effectively.

- **Written Communication Tools:** Equip mediation rooms with tablets or whiteboards to facilitate written communication between mediators and parties, especially when an interpreter is not immediately available.

- **Training for Mediators:** Provide training to mediators on techniques to communicate with individuals with hearing and speech impairments.

c. Inclusivity for persons with disabilities or Elderly Mediators/ visitors:

- **Accessible Infrastructure:** While physical accessibility is covered in Chapter 2, it is worth reiterating the importance of ramps, handrails, and other infrastructure elements that cater to mediators/litigants with mobility challenges.

- **Flexible Scheduling:** Offer flexible scheduling options for persons with disabilities, pregnant women or elderly mediators, allowing them to choose timings that are most convenient and comfortable for them.

3.9 Hardware Adjustments for Accessibility (e.g., special keyboards, mouse alternatives etc.)

In a digitally driven workspace, ensuring accessibility is paramount. Yet, challenges persist, as evidenced by a female employee at the Supreme Court who is

visually impaired and lacks the requisite hardware adjustments to navigate her tasks efficiently.

(a) Challenges

- **Limited Interaction with Technology:** Without specialized keyboards designed for visually impaired users, the employees might struggle with standard computer tasks.
- **Dependency on Others:** The lack of appropriate hardware may force the employees to rely on colleagues for tasks that they can independently perform with the right tools, reducing their autonomy and potentially slowing down work processes.
- **Communication Barriers:** Without a telephone system tailored for the visually impaired, the employee could face challenges in accessing features, understanding caller ID information.
- **Inefficiency and Frustration:** Continuously navigating a non-accessible workspace can lead to a feeling of inefficiency and frustration, which could affect the employee's overall morale and job satisfaction.

(b) Suggestions to Enhance Accessibility:

- **Specialized Keyboards/Braille Keyboards:** These keyboards come with Braille labels on each key, allowing visually impaired users to identify and press the correct keys without difficulty. Provide such keyboards to visually impaired users.
- **Recognition Software:** Implement software that converts spoken words into text, allowing the employee to dictate commands or documents without needing to type.
- **Screen Readers:** Equip the computer with screen reading software that reads out loud the content displayed on the screen. This assists visually impaired users in navigating through files, applications, and web pages.

Telephones for the Visually Impaired:

- **Large Button Phones:** Phones with oversized buttons can make dialling easier for those with limited vision.
- **Voice-Activated Dialling:** Phones that allow users to dial contacts through voice commands can be invaluable.
- **Audible Caller ID:** This feature announces the name or number of the incoming caller, enabling the user to identify the caller without needing to see the screen.
- **Regular Training Sessions:** Organize training sessions to familiarize the visually impaired employee with these tools. Additionally, ensure that IT support is available to address any technical difficulties or queries.

3.10 Mentioning Branch

The challenges and suggestions concerning functional accessibility are as follows:

(a) Challenges:

- **Applications in person:** The requirement to submit applications in person can pose significant challenges for persons with disabilities, pregnant women, and senior citizens.
- **Absence of Seating Arrangements:** Without dedicated seating arrangements, pregnant women and senior citizens might find it physically taxing to wait for their turn.
- **No Priority Window:** A separate window or counter catering specifically to the needs of these groups can expedite the process for them, but its absence means they have to queue up like everyone else, which can be arduous.

(b) Suggestions:

- **Dedicated Counter in Mentioning Branch:** Introduce a dedicated counter for persons with disabilities, pregnant women, and senior citizens, ensuring they do not have to wait in long queues. Train the staff at this counter to be sensitive and accommodating to the unique needs of these individuals.
- **Online Mentioning System:** Establish a robust online system where applications for mentioning can be submitted electronically, reducing the need for physical presence. Ensure this system is designed with accessibility features to cater to users with disabilities.
- **Seating Arrangements:** Provide ample seating near the Mentioning Branch, giving priority seating for pregnant women, senior citizens, and individuals with disabilities.

3.11 Reception Office [Pass counter]

To enter the Supreme Court, one either needs a proximity card or a pass from the pass counter/reception. The SuSwagatam portal has been introduced to allow lawyers, litigants, clerks, visitors, and media personnel to register and obtain entry passes online. This system facilitates real-time photo identification during entry. As a result, individuals with disabilities, women, senior citizens, and others can secure their passes online without having to stand in a queue. They also have the option to request assistance online, like a wheelchair. However, a significant number of individuals still prefer to get their passes in person from the reception counter, which also features a dedicated window for persons with disabilities and women. The data depicted below reflects online passes issued.

Table-13: Issuance of online passes

S.No.	Entry Date	Online	Reception	Group	Persons with disabilities	PIP	Court	Gender (O)	Total
1	05/09/2023	111	210	0	0	3	116	0	321
2	04/09/2023	513	558	62	0	5	189	0	1133
3	03/09/2023	69	0	0	1	0	7	0	69
4	02/09/2023	209	17	20	1	0	8	0	246
5	01/09/2023	442	463	1	1	3	188	0	906
6	31/08/2023	405	344	6	5	0	135	0	755
7	30/08/2023	100	5	9	0	0	9	0	114
8	29/08/2023	346	553	202	2	2	244	0	1101
9	28/08/2023	404	564	0	1	0	195	0	968
10	27/08/2023	48	15	0	3	0	8	0	63
11	26/08/2023	196	64	0	1	0	5	0	260
12	25/08/2023	298	569	47	5	7	238	0	914
13	24/08/2023	315	246	13	2	2	107	0	574
14	23/08/2023	172	420	0	0	3	157	0	592

A significant number of passes are generated through both the online portal and the reception counter. While the online method seems to have been introduced for convenience and quicker access, a considerable number of people still end up getting passes from the reception. Data shows that persons with disabilities also visit the Supreme Court. A visit to the reception counter reflected the following challenges:

(a) Challenges:

- **No Separate Window for Senior Citizens:** While there is a dedicated counter for persons with disabilities, the absence of separate windows for senior citizens can lead to longer waiting times and potential discomfort for these groups.
- **Lack of Seating Arrangements:** The unavailability of proper seating arrangements for persons with disabilities, pregnant women, and senior citizens

can cause physical strain and inconvenience, especially if they have to wait for extended periods.

- **Inadequate Signage:** Without clear signage indicating the seating in the facilitation center, many who would benefit from it might not be aware of its existence, leading to missed opportunities for comfort.
- **Communication Barriers:** For individuals who are hearing and speech impaired, the lack of sign interpreters or trained personnel poses a significant challenge. Communication barriers can lead to misunderstandings, and a lessened experience.

(b) Suggestions:

- **Implement Special Windows:** Introduce separate windows for senior citizens and women at the reception. This would ensure a smoother flow and less waiting time for these groups.
- **Enhance Seating Arrangements:** Introduce dedicated seating zones specifically for persons with disabilities, pregnant women, and senior citizens. Ensure they are comfortably accessible and spacious.
- **Signage & Awareness:** Properly marked and visible signs should be placed to guide visitors to the facilitation center.
- **Introduce Communication Assistance:** Employ sign interpreters or personnel trained in sign language at the reception. This would greatly assist visitors with hearing and speech impairments.
- **Regular Training:** Organize regular training sessions for staff to be sensitive to the needs of all visitors, ensuring they can provide assistance when required.

For further enhancing SuSwagatam portal, following points may be considered:

The software currently captures gender in personal details. It should present options such as access to creche, lactation room, and a special waiting room for pregnant women. These features will help in catering to specific needs, ensuring a more inclusive approach.

Accessibility for persons with disabilities:

A crucial enhancement is the incorporation of detailed options under the tab capturing whether the visitor is physically disabled. The main menu can be expanded to specify the type of disability, such as visual impairment, hearing impairment, locomotor disability, intellectual disability, or other specified disabilities.

Locomotor Disability Sub-Menus:

For those with locomotor disabilities, the sub-menu should further display options to specify whether they are wheelchair users, using crutches, braces, or other prosthetic devices, and whether they require inclusivity services or are accompanied by a caretaker. Additionally, there should be an option to request inclusivity service assistance if needed.

3.12 Security Checkpoints

The inability of wheelchairs to pass through security checkpoints sometimes presents challenges. Ensuring security while maintaining dignity and respect for individuals with disabilities is essential. Proper training for personnel combined with a mix of technology and efficient processes can achieve this balance.

(a) Challenges:

- **Metallic Components:** Most wheelchairs have metal parts, causing metal detectors to sound alarms, which can lead to repeated checks and inconvenience to the wheelchair user.
- **Dimensions:** Some security gates are not wide enough to accommodate larger wheelchairs.
- **Intrusiveness:** A manual check might be needed if a wheelchair does not pass through security devices, which can be intrusive and uncomfortable for the person using the wheelchair.

(b) Suggestions:

- **Specialized Screening Devices:** Introduce screening devices specifically designed for wheelchairs, which can scan them without the user having to leave the wheelchair.
- **Wider Checkpoints:** Redesign security checkpoints to ensure they are wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs of all sizes.
- **Trained Personnel:** Have personnel specifically trained to handle security checks for people with disabilities, ensuring the process is respectful and efficient.
- **Alternative Security Procedures:** Establish alternative security procedures, such as swab tests for explosive materials or hand-held metal detectors, to verify the wheelchair without causing inconvenience.
- **Clear Signage and Protocols:** Clearly mention the process for wheelchair users at the entrance, so they know what to expect.
- **Temporary Wheelchairs:** In situations where the personal wheelchair does not pass security checks, provide a temporary, pre-screened wheelchair for use within the premises. The original wheelchair can be safely stored and returned upon exit.

3.13 Other suggestions for enhancing functional accessibility

(a) Enhancing accessibility for HIV-positive/Protected persons: Section 34 of The Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (Prevention and Control) Act, 2017 delineates provisions designed to protect the confidentiality of HIV-individuals and individuals residing/resided, living/lived, cohabiting/cohabited with HIV-positive persons in legal proceedings. This section mandates the execution of strategies such as the utilization of pseudonyms during proceedings, adopting in-camera sessions, and implementing limitations on publishing any information that may disclose the identity or status of the involved parties. It also mandates the prioritisation of cases involving HIV-positive persons, ensuring their rights and dignity are

effectively safeguarded through prompt and detailed legal proceedings. Actualizing these multifaceted provisions is paramount for cultivating an equitable and inclusive environment in courts. Consequently, the Accessibility Committee has also assessed the operational framework regarding this matter and has identified the following gaps.

Challenges:

There is currently no operational framework in place for concealing the identity of HIV-positive individuals or protected persons during legal proceedings by substituting their names with pseudonyms in the records of the proceedings, as may be prescribed. This oversight is critical as it obstructs the efficacious execution of the protective provisions in the Act, intended to preserve the rights and dignity of affected individuals. This deficiency can lead to the inadvertent disclosure of the HIV-positive person/protected person.

Suggestions:

The following suggestions, in this regard, may be noted:

- **Implementation of Pseudonym Protocols:** Develop strict protocols for the use of pseudonyms and other anonymizing techniques during all stages of legal proceedings to ensure the identities of HIV-positive individuals/protected individuals are consistently protected.
- **Specialized Legal Frameworks:** Prepare and enforce clear and coherent guidelines for managing cases involving HIV-positive individuals to facilitate the prioritized and swift resolution of cases involving HIV-positive individuals.
- **Strategic Application of Technology:** Deploy innovative technology to safeguard confidentiality, employing encrypted systems to protect identity, and facilitate the prioritized and swift resolution of cases involving HIV-positive individuals.
- **Strengthened Monitoring and Supervision:** Bolster monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure stringent adherence to the mandates of the Act, and to promptly identify and address any lapses in maintaining anonymity and other implementation areas.

- **Increased Training and Awareness:** Undertake extensive training for court staff, to deepen their understanding and sensitivity regarding the rights and needs of individuals living with HIV/AIDS.

(b) Establishment of an Accessibility and Inclusion Section: The Committee on Accessibility recommends the establishment of a specialized Accessibility and Inclusion Section within the Registry of the Supreme Court of India to systematically address reasonable accommodation. This section can act as a centralized unit committed to managing all matters related to accessibility, and inclusion. This Section is proposed to act as a singular point of contact responsible for receiving, resolving, and managing all concerns, requests, and queries regarding accessibility and inclusion. It will ensure adherence to and implementation of rigorous accessibility standards and guidelines, thereby ensuring universal accessibility to services and resources offered by the Supreme Court. This section can establish or act as a single window to provide all necessary accommodations. This window would be staffed with trained personnel who understand the unique needs of individuals with disabilities and can ensure they receive the necessary support. This would simplify the process for individuals with disabilities and reduce the need to navigate complex systems to access necessary services. The window should also have at least two or three trained staff members available to assist individuals with disabilities during their court visit. Individuals with disabilities, including lawyers, litigants, or others, may inform the window in advance of their visit so that suitable arrangements can be made to pick them up from the gate and take them to their desired location. Information about the centralized window should be publicly available on the Supreme Court website to facilitate communication. The staff serving as an assistant, can provide end-to-end support to the persons with disability. In this regard, it is suggested to provide intensive training to a minimum of 50 employees of the Supreme Court of India. The purpose of this training would be to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills to assist individuals with disabilities in accessing the Supreme Court premises, both in terms of physical accessibility and functional assistance. The objective behind such training would be to ensure that there are trained persons available to support individuals with

disabilities in case of any exigency or when the designated personnel are unavailable due to leave or other reasons, and are deployed rotationally.

(c) Website Accessibility: The Supreme Court website should undergo regular audits to ensure accessibility. All documents on the website should be in searchable formats, with sharp colour contrasts and adherence to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines[3].

(d) Supreme Court Library: Equip the library with computers having screen reading software like JAWS and provide soft copy book options for eligible persons with disabilities.

(e) Accessibility Policy for FOSS: Develop a policy that ensures accessibility features are incorporated into Free and Open-Source Software (FOSS) used by the Supreme Court.

(f) Navigational Aids (apart from accessible route maps and appropriate signages): Dynamic QR Codes (i.e. two-dimensional barcodes), which can be scanned using an app on a smartphone, should be placed strategically in various locations. When the smartphone comes in the vicinity of a QR Code, the app sends out a verbal message identifying the location and giving other details and thus helps navigate within unfamiliar surroundings. QR Codes are reportedly being used by Delhi University colleges, such as Miranda House and Kirori Mal College, to make navigation easier for their visually impaired students.[4]

(g) Disability Inclusive Language: It is not enough to conduct accessibility audits and make premises disabled friendly. The language that we use to refer to persons with disabilities has a significant impact on how we perceive them and their abilities. Words can be used to either empower or disempower, and the language we choose can have a real impact on the lives of persons with disabilities.

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[3] https://guidelines.india.gov.in

[4] See Ibrar, Mohammad, 'QR codes for visually impaired at Kirori Mal College', The Times of India, June 10, 2019; Blindness Blog, 'How Miranda House, DU Is Using Technology to Make Navigation for Its Blind Students Easier', Eyeway, July 22, 2017.

Inclusive language is a key tool in combating ableism and its entrenched manifestations. When we use negative language to describe individuals with disabilities, it can lead us to believe that they are less capable and less deserving of respect. This can lead to discrimination and exclusion. By using respectful language, we can help to create a more inclusive and accepting world for individuals with disabilities. United Nations has prepared *Disability Inclusive Language Guidelines*[5], which the Supreme Court could adopt, to refer to persons with disabilities. Sensitisation and awareness efforts modelled around these Guidelines would go a long way in making this institution truly *inclusive*.

(h) Enhanced Accessibility in Auditoriums:

Earmarked Space for Wheelchair Users:

- Allocate specific spaces within the auditorium for wheelchair users, ensuring unobstructed views and easy access.
- Customize chairs within these spaces to be movable to accommodate wheelchair audiences seamlessly.

Accessible Stage and Podium:

- Install hydraulic lifts or ramps to the stage and podium to facilitate access for resource persons using wheelchairs.
- Provide customized podiums at suitable levels to accommodate speakers with varying needs, ensuring comfort and convenience.

Availability of Wheelchairs:

- Keep standby electric and manual wheelchairs available at the help desk counter for those who require them.
- The request for a wheelchair should be enabled in the ePass software, ensuring that individuals with disabilities can make requests seamlessly.

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[5] https://www.ungeneva.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/Disability-Inclusive-Language-Guidelines.pdf (accessed on 10.10.2023).

(i) Permanent Accessibility Committee: The Committee on Accessibility suggest the formation of a Permanent Accessibility Committee composed predominantly of domain experts[6], preferably individuals experiencing disabilities as defined under RPwD Act 2016, to guide and counsel the Accessibility and Inclusion Section. This committee will be instrumental in providing insights and recommendations on reasonable accommodations in individual cases and proposing strategic accessibility measures to enhance the inclusivity. This Permanent Accessibility Committee will act as an advisory body, leveraging lived experiences and specialized knowledge to facilitate informed decision-making processes, ensuring the incorporation of diverse perspectives in implementing and evaluating accessibility initiatives.

(j) Corridors: The corridors outside the courtroom are often densely crowded, and the situation is exacerbated by the presence of numerous bags and other items scattered on the floor. This overcrowding and clutter pose a significant risk, as individuals, including lawyers, need to navigate these corridors quickly. This causes significant difficulties for persons with disabilities, pregnant women, and senior citizens. These individuals may already face mobility challenges or require additional assistance, making it especially important to ensure safe and accessible pathways within the court premises. Providing designated areas or racks for bags can go a long way in preventing accidents and maintaining a safe and orderly environment in the corridors.

(k) Braille printer: By having a Braille printer, the Supreme Court can make some of its resources, such as judicial orders, etc. on request available in Braille for individuals who use this writing system. It will enable lawyers/litigants and employees with visual impairments who use Braille as their primary language to access information. Circulars and office orders can be provided in Braille using the printer, which can be a significant help to employees with visual impairments.

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[6]Composition of permanent accessibility committee is also set out in paragraphs 29-33 of the SOP that the eCommittee has circulated to the High Courts.

(l) **Panel of Sign Language Interpreters:** The Committee on Accessibility proposes the formation of a dedicated panel of sign language interpreters within the Supreme Court of India to facilitate effective communication and ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities. This panel would act as a pivotal resource, enabling clear and comprehensive communication between stakeholders, thereby ensuring that individuals with hearing and speech impairments can fully participate in and understand the proceedings of the court.

(m) **Granting Reasonable Accommodations to Lawyers with Disabilities:** The Committee on Accessibility underscores the imperative need for the Courts to grant reasonable accommodations, including but not limited to short breaks and brief adjournments, to lawyers with disabilities. It is crucial to recognize that some disabilities may hinder instantaneous assistance in matters, unlike their able-bodied counterparts, and these accommodations ensure a level playing field, allowing them to perform their roles effectively. Very often, persons with disabilities or the seniors for whom they are working, are unwilling to ask for such accommodations, because they are concerned that the matter will get adjourned for a long time, if such accommodations are asked for, thus jeopardizing the interests of the client. To address this concern, sensitization on reasonable accommodations may be held. Even short adjournments of a few minutes, or a day or two at the highest, will serve the purpose of person's with disabilities. This concern should therefore not come in the way of reasonable accommodations being sought and granted.

(n) **Mandatory Accessibility Evaluation of New Digital Platforms/ Initiatives:** There is a need for implementing mandatory accessibility evaluations for all new digital platforms and initiatives before their official release. In an era of digitization, it is vital to ensure that every individual, regardless of their abilities, can seamlessly access and utilize digital resources, thereby fostering an inclusive and equitable digital environment.

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Chapter 4
Implementation Roadmap

In this chapter, foundational principles that must inform the Supreme Court's approach and effort with regards to accessibility, have been elaborated. Following this, a roadmap for implementation is presented in this chapter. This roadmap is bifurcated into two segments: one focusing on immediate actions that address pressing concerns and another on longer-term strategic initiatives that ensure sustained progress towards a fully accessible Supreme Court.

4.1 Foundational Principles

a) **Evolving Commitment to Accessibility:** Making any institution accessible is always going to be an ongoing process. New challenges will continue to arise. As the societal understanding and technological landscape shift, so will the challenges and solutions related to accessibility. We must periodically review new challenges, fine-tune our approaches and brace for the challenges ahead, in terms of addressing the needs of the persons with disabilities. We must adopt a step-by-step approach, recognizing that changing the status quo will be an incremental process. We must address what we can now and leave the rest for the near, and not an indefinite point in the distant future.

b) **Twin-Track Approach:** In disability rights advocacy, a twin track approach means ensuring the inclusion of the persons with disabilities in mainstream processes and systems and making special systems for them where necessary. These two are not mutually exclusive. More concretely, we must make sure that we work towards making the functional processes and physical infrastructure of the Supreme Court friendly to individuals with disabilities. But even as we do so, we must create a special system to ensure document accessibility for cases involving stakeholders with disabilities, special human assistance when asked for, etc. This way, we can ensure that PwDs are not left in the lurch until every system and process becomes disability-respecting.

c) **Amplifying Voices of PwDs:** The maxim *'nothing about us, without us'* should be the cornerstone of all accessibility initiatives. By actively involving individuals with disabilities, the solutions may be both practical and empathetic.

d) **Challenging the Status Quo:** Accessibility and reasonable accommodation, as the Supreme Court recognized in *Vikash Kumar v. UPSC*[7], by definition, requires a departure from the status quo. It can be no answer to tell persons with disabilities that an accessibility measure cannot be taken up because it will be complicated to do so. Complications are inevitable. We must be willing to go the extra mile to accommodate and fully include the persons with disabilities. Our Constitution and the RPwD Act require nothing less.

e) **Proactive Accessibility Design:** On introduction of any new offering – be it service, or feature, physical or functional, we must account for accessibility at the inception stage rather than having it be an afterthought. Retrofitting existing processes and systems to make them accessible is much harder and more costly than making them accessible from the get-go. We must always try to embed accessibility from the start into our offerings for all times to come. More concretely, this means **[i]** budgeting for accessibility when drawing up the financial proposal for any project, and **[ii]** obtaining feedback from accessibility experts and PwDs before an offering is launched.

f) **Universal Design Philosophy:** All systems, processes, and infrastructures should be usable by everyone, regardless of their ability, age, or status. By incorporating universal design principles, the Court can ensure that its environment is inherently inclusive.

g) **Continuous Training & Awareness:** Beyond infrastructural changes, there is a need for sensitization and regular training for all Court personnel on the unique needs and rights of PwDs.

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7 Paragraph 71, (2021) 5 SCC 370.

h) Technological Integration: The potential of technology in bridging accessibility gaps cannot be overstated. Whether it is digital platforms or assistive devices, technology can play a pivotal role in making the Court more accessible.

4.2 Implementation Strategy

a. Immediate Changes

Physical Accessibility

S. No.	Recommendation	Tentative Deadline
1.	Accessible route maps and signages	End of 2023
2.	Friendly pathways for persons with disabilities	End of 2023
3.	Designated and monitored parking spots for the individuals with disabilities	End of 2023
4.	Accessible toilets and water units	End of 2023
5.	Battery Operated Vehicles	February 2024
6.	Hydraulic lifts in courtrooms/auditoriums	February 2024
7.	Reserved seats for persons with disabilities/pregnant women/senior citizens inside court rooms/waiting areas/filing counters/auditorium	End of 2023
8.	Accessibility changes in Canteens/ATMs/Post office/railway counter/physiotherapy room/auditorium	February 2024

Functional Accessibility

S. No.	Recommendation	Tentative timeline
1.	Availability of sign language interpretation. Providing of accessible keyboards/telephone etc. to visually impaired employees	End of 2023
2.	Accessible documents for stakeholders with disabilities	End of 2023
3.	Human assistance for persons with disabilities/senior citizens in court premises including inside the courts on request	End of 2023
4.	Sensitization session on needs of individuals with disabilities	End of 2023
5.	Separate windows for persons with disabilities and senior citizens at Filing/ Caveat/Mentioning counters	End of 2023
6.	Dedicated page on Supreme Court website for differently abled/pregnant women and senior citizens	End of 2023
7.	Establishment of dedicated Section/in Registry and permanent Committee for accessibility for persons with disabilities/pregnant women and senior citizens	End of 2023
8.	Establishment of lactation room & changing rooms	End of 2023
9.	Enhancing accessibility for HIV-positive and protected persons	End of 2023
10.	Other recommendations • Braille printers • Computer Hardware such as key boards /telephone for persons with disabilities • Security Checkpoints • Display boards/Kiosks • Corridors	End of 2023

b. Progressive Implementation

S. No.	Suggestions	Tentative timeline
1.	Adoption of equal opportunity policy	First quarter of 2024
2.	Installation of Kiosks/QR navigation technology	First quarter of 2024
3.	Creating effective procedures for fire safety and evacuation for the persons with disabilities, women and senior citizens	First quarter of 2024
4.	Conducting a detailed accessibility audit of the Supreme Court website and implementing suitable changes	Second quarter of 2024
5.	Infrastructural changes including creation of waiting areas near court rooms/ pass counter.	3rd quarter of 2024
6.	Sensitizing the bar members about making all filings accessible	3rd quarter of 2024
7.	Implementing given changes in the Supreme Court library/SCBA/SCORA/Bar Rooms/third floor	First quarter of 2024
8.	Extension of Creche facility at Additional Building Complex	3rd Quarter of 2024

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ANNEXURES

Annexure I: Equal Opportunity Policy (Proposed Draft)

(Formulated pursuant to the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016)

1. Background

Section 21 of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (the "**RPwD Act**") requires every establishment to formulate Equal Opportunity Policy (the "**EOP**") detailing measures proposed to be taken by it in pursuance of the provisions of Chapter IV of the RPWD Act. The manner of publication of EOP and the contents thereof amongst others have been prescribed under Chapters IV and V of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Rules, 2017 as amended from time to time (the "**RPwD Rules**").

In pursuance of the statutory obligation under the RPwD Act and the RPwD Rules, the Supreme Court of India hereby notifies the following EOP which is effective as on the date of its notification.

2. Policy Statement

The Supreme Court of India (the "**Supreme Court**") is committed to ensure non-discrimination and equal opportunities for every person with disability in any of the matters relating to the employment and promotion process. Further, the Supreme Court shall also ensure that employees with disabilities are provided appropriate and conducive barrier free environment and reasonable accommodations which would enable them to discharge their duties effectively in the Supreme Court.

This EOP shall extend to all employees, all law-clerks-cum-research assistants, all contractual employees, and any consultants to the Supreme Court.

This EOP sets out various measures to be undertaken by the Supreme Court to ensure effective implementation of this policy statement and such measures are set out below.

3. Identification of posts suitable for persons with disabilities and selection criteria

The Supreme Court welcomes all candidates with disabilities to apply for any of the posts advertised on an equal basis with others. The candidates with disabilities will be provided reasonable accommodations as are necessary to ensure that their evaluation process remains fair and inclusive. Further, the Supreme Court will strive to maintain all application forms for employment in an accessible manner. Any candidate with a disability facing any difficulty during the application process or in need of any reasonable accommodation may contact the liaison officer appointed by the Supreme Court.

The benefits of reservation in employment and promotion be extended to persons with benchmark disability and such benefits will be extended to list of identified posts in line with the instructions issued by Government of India in this regard from time to time. A reservation of 4% will be provided to persons with benchmark disabilities against the total vacancies including vacancies arising out of identified and non-identified posts in the cadre strength in each group of posts. The reservation for persons with benchmark disabilities shall be horizontal and the vacancies for persons with disabilities [PwDs] shall be maintained as a separate class.

The job description and selection criteria for PwDs will be reviewed once in every three years to ensure that the same is non-discriminatory and is in line with the instructions issued by Government of India from time to time.

4. Facilities and Amenities for persons with disabilities to enable to discharge their duties effectively in the Supreme Court

The Supreme Court shall ensure that the building of the Supreme Court, the Information Communication Technology Platforms, the transport facilities for its employees and the Facilities and Services provided by it remain compliant to the accessibility standards notified by the Government of India from time to time.

Separately, PwDs will be entitled to appropriate assistive technology and human support to assist them to discharge their duties in the Supreme Court effectively. Such an assessment for each employee with a disability will be done on a

case-to-case basis and appropriate reasonable accommodations will be provided to all employees with disabilities.

Specific budgetary allocations will be made in each financial year to cater to all employees with disabilities and for ensuring compliance with accessibility standards.

The Supreme Court will make every attempt to ensure that PwDs are given preference in allotment of residential accommodation and such an accommodation is compliant with accessibility standards.

The post-recruitment and pre-promotion training shall be designed keeping the accessibility needs of PwDs in mind.

The preference in posting and transfer, and special leaves for PwDs shall be in accordance with the instructions issued by the Government of India from time to time.

The Supreme Court shall also review all other employee benefits such as insurance to modify them so as to provide benefits to employees with disabilities keeping their needs in mind.

5. Appointment of grievance redressal officer / liaison officer

The Supreme Court shall appoint a grievance redressal officer not below the rank of a gazetted officer who shall also act as the liaison officer for the purposes of this EOP.

Any complaint received by the grievance redressal officer shall be enquired within a period of two weeks from the date of its receipt.

6. Maintenance of records

The Supreme Court, including the grievance redressal and liaison officers shall maintain all such records as are required to be maintained under the RPwD Act and the RPwD Rules. The disclosure of disability of any candidate and employee shall be kept confidential and such information will only be made available to those who have the need to know the same or be produced for inspection.

Annexure II: Questionnaire on Accessibility

The Committee on Accessibility appointed by Hon'ble the Chief Justice of India has been assigned the task of evaluating the physical and functional access to the Supreme Court. This evaluation includes the release of a questionnaire for stakeholders who are differently-abled to provide input on the challenges they face in accessing the Supreme Court. The collected input will be used to formulate recommendations aimed at removing barriers to access. Kindly fill out the questionnaire below:

Part I: Background questions

Q1: What is your name?

Q2: What is your age?

Q3: What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Transgender

Q4: Type of disability:

Q5: In what capacity you had an interface with the Supreme Court:

State:

District:

Part II: General questions on Court Accessibility

Q1: Did you find the Supreme Court's physical infrastructure to be disabled friendly

Q2: If not, can you please elaborate on the challenges and/or barriers you faced?

Q3: Did you face any challenges while trying to reach the desired courtroom?

Q4: If yes, could you please elaborate as to what specific challenges were these?

Q5: Does the Supreme Court have accessible parking spots?

Q6: If not, Any suggestions?

Q7: Did you find the Supreme Court's toilets to be disabled friendly?

Q8: If not, Any suggestions?

Part III: For those with visual impairment

Q9: Which, if any, of the following facilities should the Supreme Court provide? Please tick the boxes that apply:

- Braille signages/notices
- Tactile pathways
- Court staff to help you navigate the court premises

Q10: Any suggestions?

Part IV: Questions for those with hearing impairments

Q11: Do you feel that court proceedings are being effectively communicated to persons with hearing impairments?

Q12: Should the Supreme Court have sign language interpreters?

- Yes
- No

Q13: Any suggestions?

Part V: Locomotor disability

Q14: Is the Supreme Court's premises accessible to those on a wheelchair or with other locomotor challenges?

Q15: Any suggestions?

Part VI: Website Accessibility

Q16: Have you found the Supreme Court's website to be disabled friendly?

Q17: Are you able to access the following features on the Supreme Court's website? Tick all that apply:

- Captchas
- Accessing calendar options
- Entering details of a given case

Q18: Any suggestions?

Part V: Document Accessibility

Q19: Are the documents uploaded on the Supreme Court's website accessible?

Q20: Are filings/paper books in the Supreme Court disabled friendly?

Q21: Any suggestions?

Part VII: Special system

Q22: Should a special system be put in place for cases involving disabled lawyers/litigants/judges/Law Clerks/interns to facilitate effective access to all facets of a given case?

- Yes
- No

Q23: Any suggestions?

Part VIII: Video conferencing/live proceedings

Q24: Is the video conferencing solution used by the Supreme Court disabled friendly?

Q25: Should video conferencing be made mandatory in all cases involving disabled stakeholders?

- Yes
- No

Q26: Any suggestion(s).[100 words]:___

Part IX: Remarks and suggestions

Q27: Any Remarks / Suggestions: [up to 200 words]

Annexure III: Questionnaire for disability experts

This questionnaire is specifically for disability rights experts. Its aim is to draw out their inputs on how the Supreme Court can ensure comprehensive and holistic end-to-end accessibility for the differently abled.

What is your name? *

Please mention the city and state of your residence.

Q1: What suggestions, if any, would you like to share to make the Supreme Court's physical infrastructure more friendly for the visually challenged?

Q2: What facilities should the Supreme Court introduce for those with hearing impairments?

Q3: What measures can be taken to make the Supreme Court's premises more friendly for those with locomotor disabilities?

Q4: What measures should the Supreme Court take to make its physical infrastructure more friendly for those with other [except visual, hearing and locomotor disabilities?

Q5: What steps should the Supreme Court take to make its website more disabled friendly?

Q6: What steps can the Supreme Court take to make its documents and filings more disabled friendly?

Q7: If a special system is put in place for cases involving disabled stakeholders, what should be the key components of such a system?

Q8: How can existing video conferencing facilities be made more disabled friendly?

Q9: What are the special challenges faced by women with disabilities in accessing different facets of the Supreme Court? How can these challenges be effectively countered?

Q10: How can the Supreme Court make its sitting arrangements more disabled friendly?

Q11: What best practices can the Supreme Court use, with respect to the procurement of any new product/service, to make it disabled friendly from the?

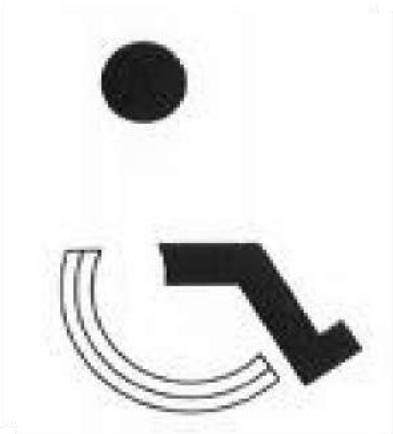
Q12: What processes and policies should the Supreme Court put in place for training all court staff on disability and inclusion?

Q13: What do you think would make the parking experience more comfortable for the differently-abled in the Supreme Court?

Q14: Any Remarks / Suggestions? [upto 200 words]

APPENDICES

ACCESSIBILITY AUDIT REPORT



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Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study is to help improve "accessibility for disability" by identifying gaps and recommending practical workable solutions to enhance access and inclusion for Persons with Disabilities. Gaps are identified by benchmarking the existing facilities against Accessibility Design Guidelines. The Study is guided by the philosophy that "Inclusive environment is physically accessible and sensitive to social needs of Persons with Disabilities".

Approach and Methodology

Approach: The approach of the study was Participatory. Petitioners, Lawyers, Judges and Staff via feedback from posted on the Supreme Court Website engaged through surveys and in-person discussions to understand constraints faced by Persons with Disabilities.

Methodology Used: The study conducted by the audit team comprising of Nilesh Singit, Sameer Singit and Pwd Dept of Supreme Court.

Disability Access Audit: To identify measures required to improve physical accessibility across the premise, for persons with physical and sensory impairment.

Key Gaps and Suggested Recommendations

This document summarizes the key findings and recommendations.

Acknowledgement

This report will be incomplete without acknowledging the proactive support of the Staff at the Supreme Court.

1. Physical Access to Supreme Court Premises

Observation Recommendation

1. "Physical Accessibility"

Old Supreme Court premises there is an ease of movement as there are elevators, wide corridors, ramps at various places. Access to individual Court Rooms is a challenge as they have steps. Installation on of a ramp is a challenge as there is not enough space for a ramp with suitable gradient. This is likely to be a major constraint in accessing court rooms for hearings for persons with orthopaedics disability and wheelchair users.

New Buildings and Guest Accommodations conform to Accessibility Guidelines, however they lack in certain finishing details, e.g., Washrooms the grab bars are missing or misplaced, tactile paving is present but do not continue beyond the reception area, etc.

2. Signage & Route Map

There are no route maps at entry points and the signage within the premise is inadequate. At some places, signage used is inconsistent.

Accessible route maps must be available at entrance as well as at every gate. Signage is important not just for Persons with Disabilities but for all visitors. Appropriate signage should be installed across the premise.

3. Pathways

Pathways across the premise are not levelled and continuous. At some places gratings are too wide and persons with reduced mobility and vision are exposed to the risk of tripping and injuring themselves.

Levelled pathways laid out with tactile blocks are required to guide Persons with Disabilities. Poorly managed pathways are also inconvenient and risky for non-disabled users**.**

Observation Recommendation

Washrooms

- There are washrooms on every floor, some are modified with accessibility in mind but still require a few more modifications.
- Access to washroom is the most basic requirement for any person. It is recommended that accessible washroom must be constructed in every building / every floor including the convention centre must have a few rooms that have accessible bathroom with Rollin showers.

Water-units

- Water units are installed on every floor. The height of each vary, must be standardised.

Staircases

- Hand Railings present. but do not extend beyond the start and end of the steps. Blind persons thus find it difficult to assess where the steps begin.

Elevators

- Existing elevator is adequate for 1 wheelchair user.

Lighting

- Adequate lighting in all parts of the premise. Areas frequently visited/ accessed, should always be well lit; such as access paths, rooms and corridors.

Fire and Safety Precautions

- University needs to think through fire and safety measures for all persons with special focus on Persons with Disabilities. As an example, fire alarms which would work in alerting deaf persons

Related to Disability Inclusion

Immediate Changes:

- Establishment of an Equal Opportunity Cell (EOC) at the earliest
- Regular, ongoing sensitization for staff, members recommended.
- Washroom and bathrooms must be checked for repairs at regular intervals for any damage or vandalism.
- Staff especially Engineers and maintenance crew trained on Accessibility issues. They can carry out regular maintenances and incorporate accessibility features in existing and any new construction.

Long Term Changes – Changes below, can be implemented in the longer term

- Audit committee to be constituted (must include a person with disability) for regular audits of the physical and learning infrastructure.
- The audit team understands that ensuring “complete accessibility” in a built-up environment may be resource intensive and requires on-going commitment from all stakeholders. In the short term, the above stated changes can “improve accessibility and inclusion” for Persons with Disabilities.

Recommendations have been made keeping in mind the following aspects:

- Changes suggested are fair and non-discriminatory and applicable to a diverse set of users
- Changes are cognizant of practical challenges of retrofitting
- Changes to be implemented incrementally

1.1. Entrance

Observations: -

- Gate A- Only for Judges and VIP
  This gate is reserved for judges and VIPs.
- Gate B
  Supreme Court Gate B can be reached Bus, Metro or Train. These are the lines and routes that have stops nearby -
- D- Exit
- Gate E- Entrance
  Supreme Court Gate No. E can be reached by Metro, Bus or Train. These are the lines and routes that have stops nearby -

  The various entrances to the Supreme Court are well connected to all modes of transportation which makes it easy for everyone.



Gate B



Tactile Tiles covered by leaves, need regular cleaning



Accessible entrance with adequate space for alighting from vehicle



Requires Ramp





Gate D



Figure A



Figure B

 *Figure C*	• Steps are there, require ramp to be installed. • Tactile tiles begin and end abruptly • Figure C shows drain that needs to be repaired

Recommendation(s):

- Entrances

  There are many entrances which can be confusing. Supreme Court website must provide details of accessibility routes and facilities available to persons with disabilities

- Security Check Points

  DGCA has setup a comprehensive best practice norm for security check of persons with disabilities, their mobility and assistive devices. DGCA Guidelines[1] Part C Accessibility features to be provided by Security Agencies ought to be adapted to suit Supreme Court requirements. Details of Security Check of persons with disabilities is beyond the scope of this audit

Route Map

- A detailed Route Map should be placed at a height of 1200mm from the ground at all the three entrances. The font size and the lighting around the map should be appropriate
- Options of having a tactile route map may also be explored
- A few copies of tactile maps with touch memo devices may be kept at the Security to assist navigation around for persons with vision impairment.

Pre-Arrival Information –

- All pre-arrival information (leaflets and printout of route map) should be kept atall the entrances. It could outline specific access difficulties in each building as wellas give reference to the accessible routes.
- Few copies of pre-arrival information and map should be designed in large font size and colour contrast to assist persons with vision impairment.

[1] DGCA Guidelines
https://www.civilaviation.gov.in/sites/default/files/Accessibility%20Standards%20and%20Guidelines%20for%20Civil%20Aviation_English%20%282%29%20%281%29_compressed_0.pdf

- A contact point for assistance of PwD, at the reception.
- Signage and Guiding Strips – Needed right from the entrances to Court Room and other areas and facilities within the premises.
- Staff Sensitization – Staff Sensitization should be made a part of the induction process for all new staff members. It should include the following –
  - Sensitizing staff about the specific needs of PwD, staff and visitors.
  - Brief them about facilities to assist PwD - including guiding and assisting PwD when required about Accessible Routes and Court Rooms and other facilities within the premises.

Refer Standards and Guidelines

- Visual Accessibility – Signage and Lighting
- Pathways

1.2. Parking

Observations:

a) Adequate parking space for vehicles has been provided at Gate E/D/C. However, we were informed that these parking spaces are reserved for lawyers. Only one parking spot is specifically designated for PWD (near Gate C), which is at a considerable walking distance to the Main Building.

b) Travel path to and from some parking areas is uneven or obstructed by other objects.

c) No signage or marking guides the persons to the parking area.

 *Needs to be filled and levelled, while carrying out audit the front wheel of the wheelchair got stuck in the wet sand and toppled*	 *Adequate and spacious parking, a few spots could be allocated for disability parking spot*



Adequate and spacious parking, a few spots could be allocated for disability parking spot which is close to the entrance to the building



Adequate and spacious parking, however the cars parked in the front are a hindrance



Parking spot has signage, however the object can be an obstruction, needs to be moved away from the spot

Recommendation(s)

PARKING CONSIDERATIONS

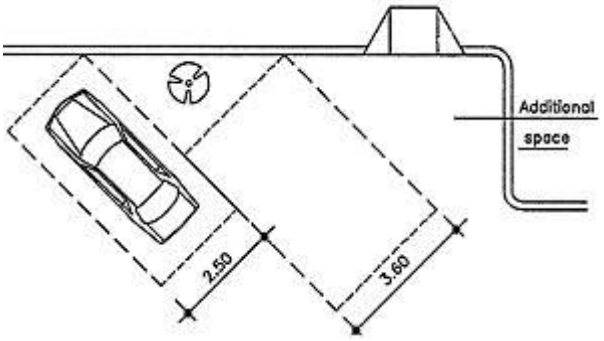
- The accessible car parking lot should: -
  - Have minimum dimensions 5000 mm×3600 mm;
  - Have a firm, level surface without aeration slabs; and
  - Wherever possible, be sheltered.

Location

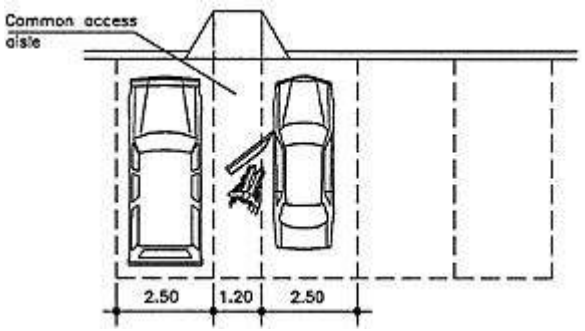
- Accessible parking lots that serve a building should be located nearest to an accessible entrance and / or lift lobby within 30 meters. In case the access is through lift, the parking shall be located within 30 meters.
- The accessible route of 1200 mm width is required for wheelchair users to pass behind vehicle that may be backing out.
- The ends of rows are preferable for vans with lifts for wheelchair users.

Dimensions

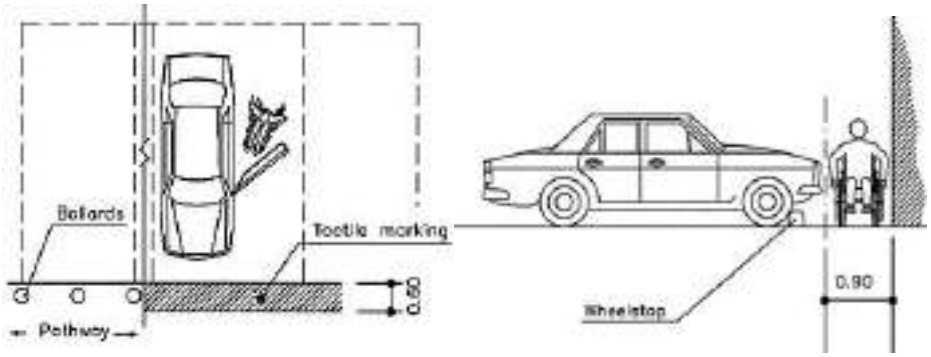
- Where there are two accessible parking bays adjoining each other, then the 1200mm side transfer bay may be shared by the two parking bays. The transfer zones, both on the side and the rear should have yellow or white cross-hatch road markings.
- Consideration should be given to the distribution of spaces for use by the Persons with Disabilities in accordance with the frequency and persistence of parking needs.
- Two accessible parking lot should be provided for every 25 car parking spaces.
- Where parking spaces are angled, the extra space at the end of a row can be used as a parking aisle for disabled persons.



- If a curb exists, curb ramps should be provided to link accessible parking spaces to accessible pathways.

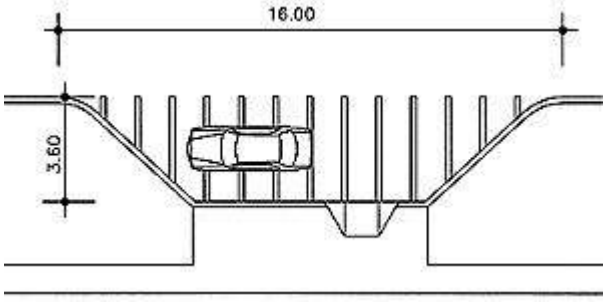


- If no curb exists, a textured surface at least 0.60 m wide is needed to separate the pathway from the vehicular area; otherwise, bollards should be used (see Street Furniture). Pre-cast wheelstops can also be used to set apart a passage at least 0.90 m wide (fig. 4) (fig. 5).



Curbside parking

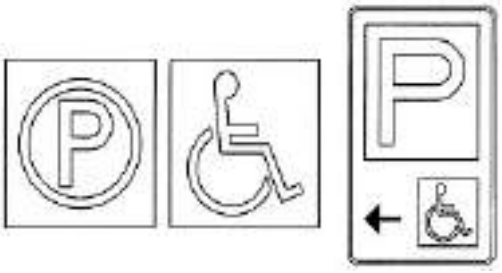
- Curbside parking is dangerous for disabled people unless it is designed as an accessible drop-off area.
- Drop-off areas are beneficial for picking up and dropping off people with physical limitations, parents with children, people carrying loads, etc.



- Drop-off zones should be provided at public transport stops such as bus stops, and not more than 30.00 m from accessible building entrances.
- The drop-off area should be at least be 3.60 m wide and incorporate an aisle 1.20 m wide to allow for manoeuvring. The length should accommodate at least two cars.
  - Appropriate curb ramps should be provided to facilitate circulation over paved
  - A protected shelter or canopy with seating facilities is a recommended design feature at passenger loading zones.
- Signs should be installed to identify a drop-off zone and prevent its misuse as a parking space.

Signage

- International symbol of accessibility (wheelchair sign) should be displayed at approaches and entrances to car parks to indicate the provision of accessible parking lot for Persons with Disabilities within the vicinity.



- Directional signs shall be displayed at points where there is a change of direction to direct Persons with Disabilities to the accessible parking lot.
- Where the location of the accessible parking lot is not obvious or is distant from the approach viewpoints, the directional signs shall be placed along the route leading to the accessible parking lot.
- Vertical signs shall be provided, to make it easily visible, the sign should be at a minimum height of 2100 mm
- Accessible parking lot should be identifiable by the International Symbol of Accessibility. The signs should not be obscured by a vehicle parked in the designated lot.
- Vertical signs shall be provided, to make it easily visible, the sign should be at a minimum height of 2100 mm

2. Main Building (Old)

2.1. Museum

Observations:

- Entry to the museum was easy and accessible
- Basement section of the museum is not accessible to a wheelchair bound person because of the absence of lifts.
- Accessible toilet present but door positioning and opening is not appropriate, making access difficult for wheelchair bound person.
- No signage or tactile marking present
- Toilet needs to be re-designed



Well lit, items exhibit placed



Wheelchair height



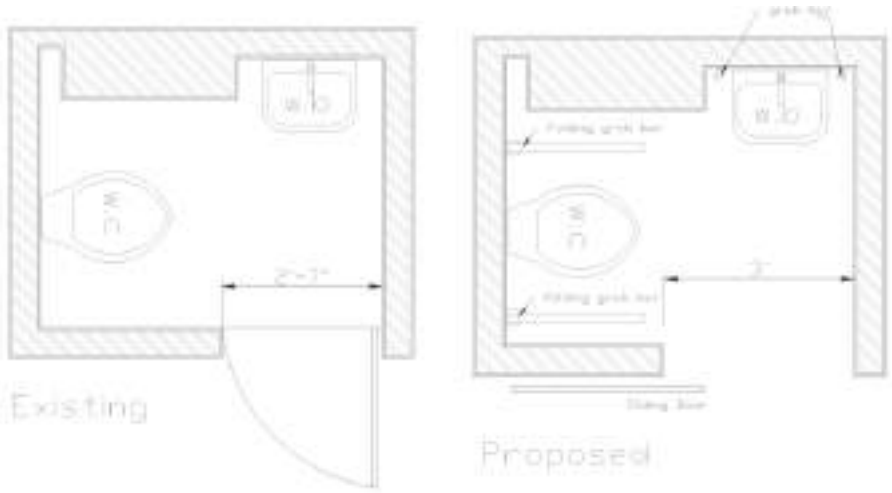
Spacious Well-Lit



The toilet is narrow and cannot be accessed by a wheelchair user as the door is not wide enough

Recommendation (s):

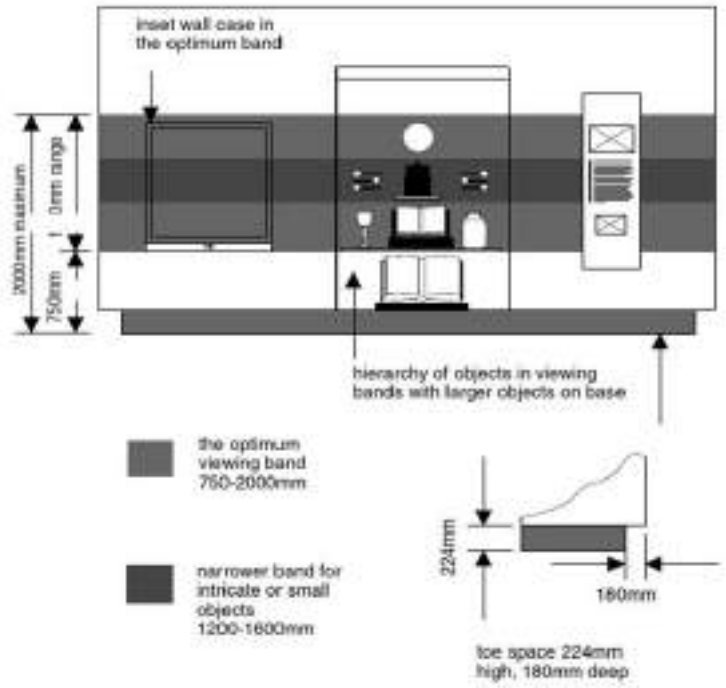
- Lift to reach basement
- Accessible toilet door should repositioned



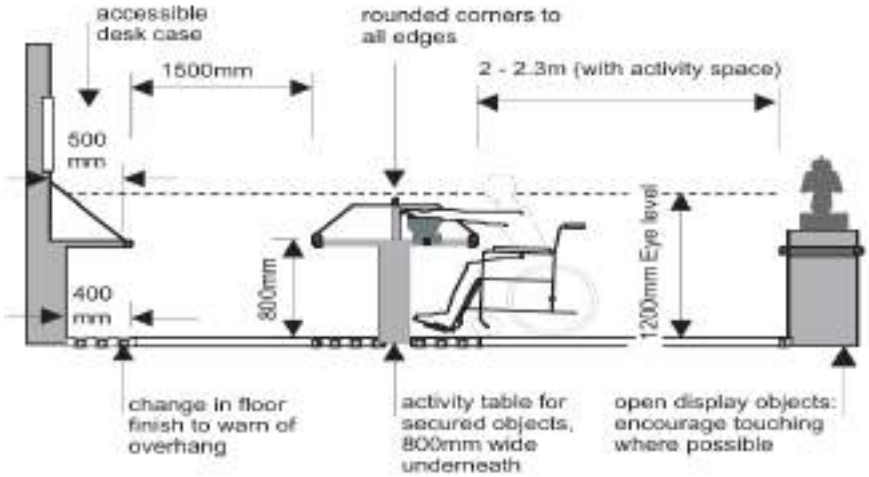
A sliding door suggested to compensate for space.

Showcase and object displays

- All displays, cased or otherwise, should fall within the general optimum viewing band of 750-2000mm from Finished Floor Level, with smaller or detailed objects and main text falling within the narrower band of 1200-1600mm above Finished Floor Level. Ensure everything is visible from a wheelchair.
- Desk cases should be no higher than 800mm from Finished Floor Level, with a 400mm minimum overhang and 800mm wide clear space underneath for wheelchair parking. Add a further 800mm to the width of the adjacent passageway to prevent obstructions.
- Visitors should be clearly invited to touch open displays wherever possible, and the object(s) should be placed at wheelchair-accessible height. Consider providing braille labels, placed flat, or at a low angle not exceeding 45˚. You should also provide opportunities to use the sense of smell, e.g., spice jars, herb sachets, floral perfumes, etc as appropriate.
- Provide a toe space of 224mm high x 180mm deep around constructed walls, cases and large plinths to allow wheelchair access, or space for a wheelchair to draw alongside the case.'
- Ensure there is sufficient viewing space for large objects, photographs, paintings etc, by avoiding displaying them in a constrained viewing environment where bottlenecks may occur. Provide a three dimensional or tactile scale model of very large objects,



- Interactive displays
  - Activity surfaces or computer stations should be no higher than 800mm from Finished Floor Level, fully accessible for a parked wheelchair (no solid fronts or obstructions, as for desk cases).
  - Work surfaces should be lit to a level of at least 200 lux. Interactive screens should be shielded from direct sunlight and bright light sources. The display should allow people with low vision to get their faces close to the screen. If there is an inductive loop facility, remember to sign this clearly.
  - Push-buttons or operational features should be easy to operate (by arthritic hands, in reach of wheelchair users etc.), and easy to comprehend. They should contrast with the background. There is an increasing number of types of controls available and considering a variety of needs will help inform your choice. Some points to consider are:
    - Colour: do not use colour alone as a means of differentiation.
    - Size: a larger size can significantly help some users
    - Buttons should be able to be pressed by visitors with various
    - Levels of dexterity
    - Touch: all keys or buttons should preferably be raised by a minimum of 2mm.
    - Buttons and other interactive features should be located 1050mm above Finished Floor Level, if wall-mounted.
    - Operating instructions should be clear, concise and featured prominently on the desktop or wall-mounted within the narrow viewing band of 1200-1600mm above Finished Floor Level.



- Exhibition graphics and labels: writing text
  - Visitors will have a wide range of literacy levels.
- To cater for a wide range of literacy, use Plain English. It enables fast comprehension while standing and is accessible to Deaf people, whose first language is Sign language, people with learning difficulties vernacular and overseas visitors.
- Exhibition graphics and labels: positioning
  - Labels should be placed at an appropriate angle for viewing (ideally at 90˚ to the line of vision) and as close to the viewer as possible. They should also be easy to read by wheelchair users who will have a lower optimum viewing height and bifocal wearers who may have difficulty focusing on labels positioned at the back of cases.
  - Ensure labels can be read, and objects seen, from the same vantage point. Provide a clear numbering system (large point size) and an additional graphic link, e.g., the shape of the object on a simple plan of the case or a simple object description, repeated on the main label and next to the object number.
  - Graphics and labels must be positioned at the optimum viewing height (750 -2000mm above Finished Floor Level or 1200 - 1600mm for detailed text).

Blind and visually impaired visitors	Tactile guide paths
	Secured stairs with handrails and visual contrasting non-slip stair nosings
	Audio information
	Braille plaques
Deaf and hearing impaired visitors	Assistive listening devices
	Audio induction loops
	Visual information
Visitors with reduced mobility	Lowered counters at information desk, restaurant, and shop
	Courtesy wheelchairs
	Ramps and elevators
	Large spaces for wheelchair users
	Wheelchair seating areas
Visitors with a cognitive impairment	Universal pictograms
Visitors in the autism spectrum	Quiet places

Refer:-

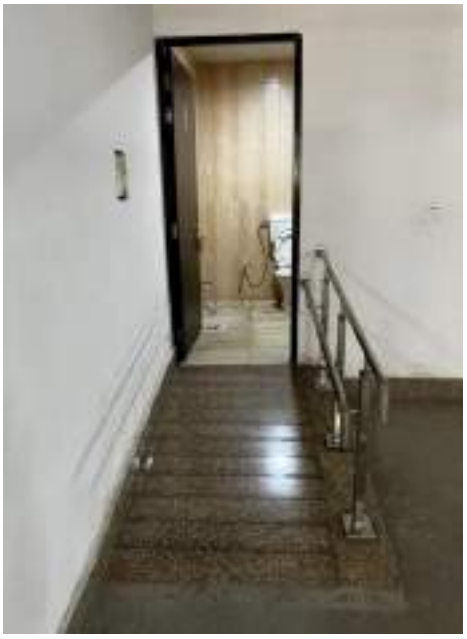
a) Signage

b) Washroom

2.2. Annexe Building (Gr + 2) + Basement

Observations:

- Ramp at the entrance of a decent gradient.
- Ramp connecting the courtroom to the first floor was slippery, with no grab bars on both sides.
- Ramp made of wood at the start of the courtroom, not of the proper gradient.
- PWD washrooms on each floor, but grab bars are completely missing in a few and not fixed at a proper height in the rest.
- Lift facility available.
- Drinking water Unit is present on each Floor, but improper height makes it inaccessible for person wheelchair bound person.
- No Signage throughout the building guiding the user.
- No tactile or warning strip.
- Toilet near lift No. 5 was locked could not audit





The gradient of the ramp, the grab bar of the ramp is adequate. The width of the door is wide enough for wheelchair. The jet spray is beyond the reach of a person with mobility Impairment. Require grab bar. Please refer annexe on washroom for detail specifications for the washroom



Lift spacious enough to carry one wheelchair, has braille embossed buttons and announces floor for Blind. Need Signage that direct the person to the lift



Please refer recommendation below



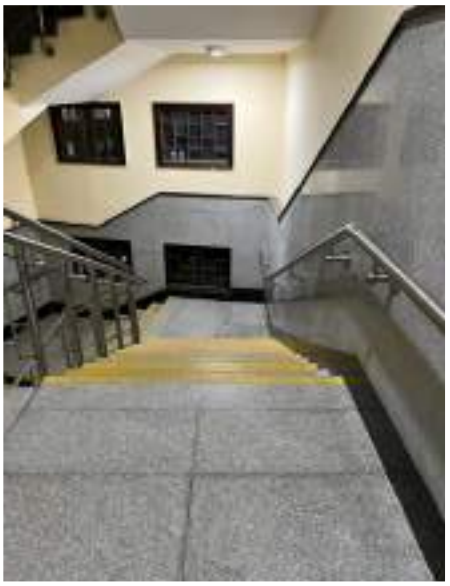
No grab bars, placement of water jet not ideal. Refer Section on washroom



No grab bars, placement of water jet not ideal. Refer Section on washroom

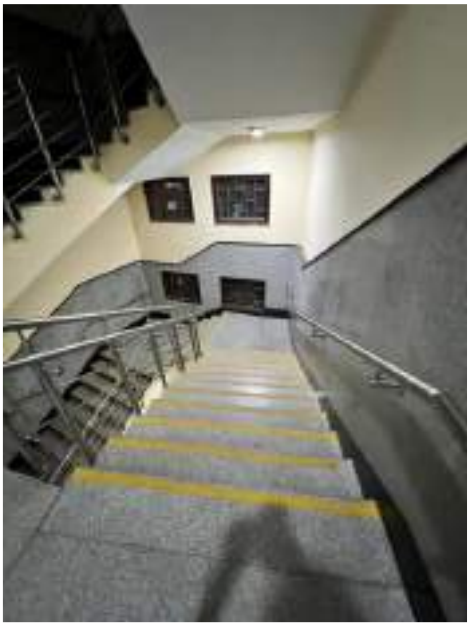


There is a drinking water section on every floor, they are not as per guidelines. Refer Water Fountain



Tactile Warning indicating begin and end of step.









No grab bars, placement of water jet not ideal. The grab bar is an obstacle and is a barrier for to the wheelchair to enter easily. Refer Section on washroom.



Needs fixing



Toilet Next lift no 5 locked





Accessible Toilet labelled DAP [Differently Abled Person] is on every floor with identical measurements, however with slight variation some having grab bars that are an impediment. It is suggested that the label DAP be removed in conformity with accepted nomenclature of disability. Wheelchair symbol is an adequate representation for an accessible toilet.

Recommendation (s):

- Bridge Connecting to Buildings. Gradient is very steep, and the floor is very slippery, especially during rainy season as it is open to the elements. Suggested that this bridge be reconstructed during the next major repairs. As a power wheelchair user I needed assistance to use this bridge. Whilst going up the bridge the batteries were put to maximum test, whilst going down the gradient made it difficult to control the wheelchair. No tactile paved flooring makes it difficult for blind persons to move especially during rush hours.
- Temporary changes grab bar installed on both the sides, non-slippery tiles installed, tactile paving and the bridge could be covered with awning to keep rain away.
- Unless under repair all washrooms must be open to public especially ones earmarked for persons with disabilities.

Refer: -

a) Washroom

b) Drinking Water

c) Signage.

2.3. Pass Counter






Observations:

- Located at gate E.
- Ramp found of a decent gradient. However, no grab bars found.
- A dedicated counter for PWD was allotted.
- No signage or tactile markings.

Recommendation (s):

Refer:

- *Ramps*
- *Signages.*

2.4. ATM (SBI/UCO Bank)

The following areas were audited:

a) UCO Bank.

b) UCO Bank ATM.

c) SBI ATM.





A ramp is required. Please refer section on ramp



Reception Counter is high. Please refer to section on Counters.



A slight re-arranging of furniture could accommodate wheelchair users

2.5. UCO Bank





A ramp is required. Please refer section on ramp





A ramp is required. Please refer section on ramp





Threshold, should levelled for wheelchair and could be a trip hazard







Three steps to the ATM and two steps inside the ATM.
A ramp is not possible to construct. It is suggested that this be relocated or reconstructed.

Observations: Uco Bank

a) A small ramp at the entrance with no grab bans on both sides.
b) Door width of the bank meets the standard guidelines,
c) Counter height is appropriate for wheelchair bound persons.
d) Due to improper placement of furniture (sofa /chair), it becomes difficult for a wheelchair bound person or other PWD to approach the counter and move around the bank easily.
e) No signage or tactile markings.

Recommendation (s): Uco Bank

- Grab bars should be provided at both sides of the ramp.
- Kick plates can be installed at the bottom of the door
- Furniture should be placed properly.

Observations: Uco Bank ATM

a) Three steps to the ATM and two steps inside the ATM.
b) No grab bars on both sides of the steps.
c) Completely inaccessible for wheelchair bound person.
d) No signage or tactile markings.

Recommendation (s): Uco Bank ATM

a) Should be relocated if possible.

Observations: SBI ATM

a) Ramp of an improper gradient.
b) No grab bar on both sides.
c) No signage or tactile markings.

Recommendation (s): SBI ATM

a) A ramp of the proper gradient should be installed with grab bars on both the sides

Refer:

a) Signage
b) Ramp.

2.6. Utility Lounge

Observations:

a) Ramp with decent gradient present with grab bars on both sides.
b) Was found to be accessible.





Ramp as per guidelines. Sewage manhole a hazard can cause injuries from slips, trips and falls. Please refer section on Sewage Covers





Table height as per guidelines

2.7. Indian Post Office





Counter too high for a wheelchair bound person to access. Threshold needs to be levelled, a trip hazard and an impediment for wheelchair user

Observations:

a) Double door opens on the inside.

b) No ramp or grab bars.

c) Counter too high for a wheelchair bound person to access.

d) Enough space inside for a wheelchair bound person to manoeuvre.

Recommendation (s):

a) A ramp with proper gradient should be made with grab bars on both sides.

b) A part of the counter should be lowered for easy access.

c) Assistance will be required for a wheelchair bound person.

Refer:

a) Ramp.

b) Counters

2.8. Department Canteen





Threshold at the entrance





All the tables were found to be for standing users. No sitting tables were found. All the tables were found to be for standing users. No sitting tables were found.

Observations:

a) A double-door entry, with enough space for a wheelchair bound person to enter with assistance.

b) Threshold at the entrance

c) All the tables were found to be for standing users. No sitting tables were found.

d) We were informed by the canteen manager that orders for folding tables and chairs have been placed, which will help wheelchair bound persons.

e) No signage and tactile markings.

Recommendation (s):

a) Though the door is wide enough for wheelchair access, assistance will be required to open the door.

b) A ramp with a proper gradient with grab bars on both sides should be provided.

c) At least a couple of tables must be of accessible height.

d) Proper Signage and tactile markings should be provided.

Refer:

a) Signage

b) Tactile Markings

c) Ramps.

2.9. Supreme Court Bar Association

Observations:

- A double door opening on the inside.
- Door opening is enough to pass a wheelchair. However, both doors need to be opened.
- Threshold at the entrance makes it difficult for a wheelchair user to access.
- No tactile markings.

Recommendation (s):

- Though the space is wide enough after opening both doors for a wheel chair to enter, assistance will be required.
- Thing placed obstructing the opening of the door or wheelchair access should be removed or relocated.
- Ramp with appropriate gradient and grab bar should be provided.

Refer:

a) Ramps

b) Tactile.

2.10. Railway Booking Counter

Observations:

a) Two Double doors present. One opens on the inside, whereas the other opens on the outside.

b) Threshold at the entrance makes access for a wheelchair bound person difficult.

c) No proper signage or tactile markings.

d) Height of the helpdesk counter makes it difficult for a wheelchair bound person to access it.

e) Staff counter has a step-up, with no railings provided at the end of the ledge, which can prove dangerous.



Threshold, ramp required



Notice Board needs to be Braille Friendly





Ramps required, due to paucity of space for ramp with acceptable gradient it is suggested to relocate the office

Recommendation (s):

a) Though the space is wide enough after opening both doors for a wheelchair bound to access, assistance will be required.

b) Replace the existing door to a single door as per standard guidelines.

c) Counter height should be reduced to a sitting height making it accessible to all.

d) Ramp with proper gradient and grab bars at both ends should be provided

Refer:

a) Ramps

b) Doors

c) Counter Height Drawing.

2.11. Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association

Observations:

a) Double door opens on the inside, providing enough space for a wheelchair to pass after opening both doors.

b) Threshold at the entrance causes hindrance to the PWD.

c) At the time of audit, we found the place to be locked so could not assess the inside (SCAONA).

Recommendation (s):

d) Ramp with proper gradient and grab bars on both sides should be provided.

e) Assistance will be required for easy access for a wheelchair bound person.

f) Door needs to be changed as per standard guidelines

Refer:

a) Ramps

b) Doors

c) Signage.

2.12. Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) Locker Room

Observations:

a) No signage present.

b) No grab bars on both sides of the existing ramp.



Mattress can be an impediment to wheelchair and a trip hazard



Door wide enough, however bucket can be an obstruction, needs to be removed

Recommendation(s):

a) Ramp of proper gradient with grab bar on both sides should be provided.

Refer:

a) Signages

b) Ramps

2.13. Physiotherapy Room





Observations:

a) Two entrances have been provided, one on the front and back, the other on the back entrance.
b) The front entrance has steps which make it inaccessible for wheelchair bound person.
c) No proper signages or tactile markings.
d) Back entrance has a ramp of an appropriate gradient.
e) Doors are wide enough for a wheelchair to pass.
f) No signage was found indicating directions to the ramp.
g) Grab bars are absent on both sides of the existing ramp.

Refer:

a) Ramp
b) Signages.

2.14. Judges Chamber Building

- Gymnasium
- Recreational Area
- Chambers

<table>
<tr><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Portable Ramp needs to be provided. Please refer annexure</td></tr>
</table>





Need Handrail. Please refer to Stair





The cavity needs to filled and levelled, Door readjusted accordingly

Observations:

a) The entrance to the building has steps. Constructing a ramp would be difficult. Installing a hydraulic lift should be explored.

b) The ground floor level has a gymnasium and a recreational play area.

c) The upper floors are chambers for the judges and is accessible through the lift.

d) The gymnasium and the recreational area were found to be accessible.

e) The Judges chambers on the second floor was under renovation. However, on visiting one of the washrooms on the same floor, it was found to be accessible.

Recommendation (s):

a) A ramp with proper gradient should be made with grab bars on both sides, which will help the building to be accessible to wheelchair bound persons.

b) Proper signage and tactile markings should be provided.

Refer:

- Signages.
- Ramps
- Tactile Marking.

2.15. Courtrooms





Threshold must be ramped for wheelchair






WAITING AREA
&
ENTRY FOR COURT
NO. 14


WAITING AREA
&





Steps, need ramp, as there is not enough space for permanent ramp. Portable ramps need to be explored



Steps, need ramp, as there is not enough space for permanent ramp. Portable ramps need to be explored



Waiting area, the partition could be moved a bit further providing more leg space and space for two wheelchairs can be reserved



Waiting area, the partition could be moved a bit further providing more leg space and space for two wheelchairs can be reserved



Some space could be reserved for persons with disabilities by rearranging chairs. A clear path must be there to allow lawyers / petitioners with disability to approach the bench when required





Waiting area, the partition could be moved a bit further providing more leg space and space for two wheelchairs can be reserved





Portable Ramp needs to be provided. Please refer annexure

Observations:

- Entry to all the courtrooms and waiting rooms has a stepped entry making it inaccessible for a wheelchair bound person and other PWD.
- Corridors were wide, but proper tactile markings were absent.
- Signages were either absent or placed at an inappropriate height with inconsistent font size.
- Lift was available, thus making access to all floors easy.
- Drinking water units were placed at a height (step-ups), making them inaccessible.
- Only one drinking unit was found to be as per the Universal Guidelines (East flank of the building).
- The Judge's entrance to courtroom Nos. 6,7,8 & 9 have steps but no handrails.
- Washroom audited on the west flank (near Mr. Chavan's office) was found to be accessible, but no designated cubicle was found for PWD
- No warning strip was found at the end and the start of the staircase.













The washroom has two cubicles and urinals. The cubicles are narrow and wheelchair user cannot use either of them.

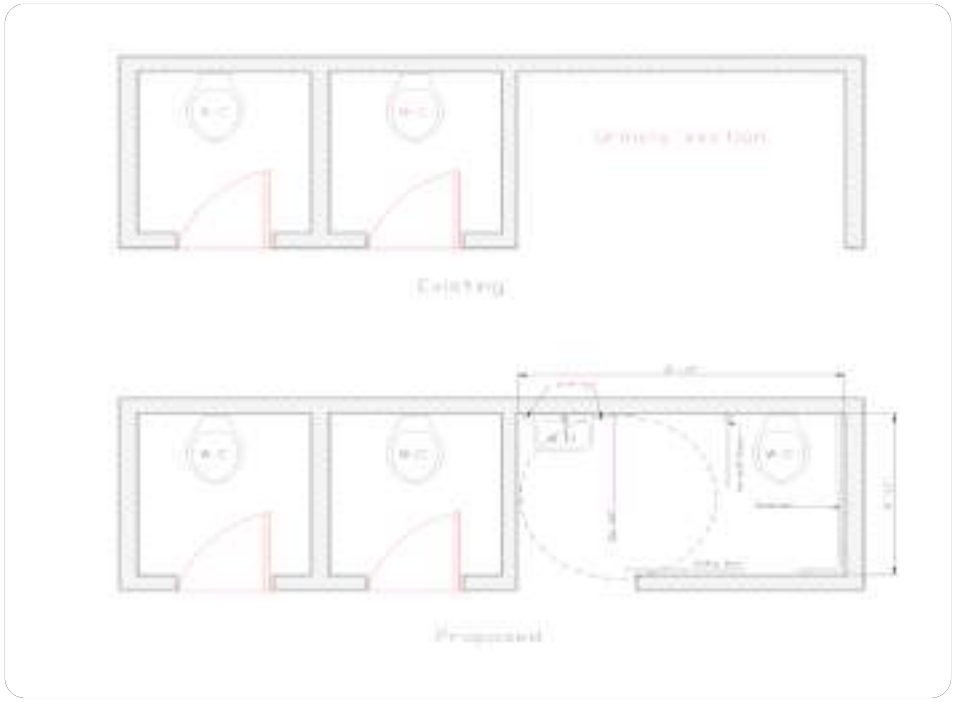
Recommendation (s):

a) Permanent ramps cannot be built considering the gradient required and the heritage status of the complex. Thus, we recommend that folding ramps should be procured, which can be used when required.

b) A proper seating area should be designated for wheelchair bound persons, which will make navigation easier for them when the courtrooms are crowded.

c) Drinking water units should be provided at an accessible height without any levels as provided in the East flank of the building.

d) At least one washroom on each floor should be made accessible for PWD. The empty space next to the cubicle and opposite to the urinal has been utilised to have a cubicle that is disabled friendly. There are a couple of urinals in the space where the new one is proposed, they would have to be removed.



e) Proper directional signages should be provided, making access to each point easy i.e., Courtroom/Washroom/Drinking Water/Lift/etc.

f) Tactile markings should be provided.

g) Tactile markings should also be provided at the start and the end of every ramp.

Refer:

a) Ramps

b) Signages

c) Drinking Water Units

d) Tactile Marking

e) Stair Case

3. New Building

Complex consists of Blocks A, B. C. D and E. The New Building complex was constructed post passing of the disability act. Accessibility of the premises is the integral part of the construction and design. There are ramps which have been installed with proper gradients, grab bars and washrooms follow the Guidelines. Tactile flooring at the entrance of each block and the lift area, however, end abruptly in most places. Signage is missing and need to be installed to complement the tactile flooring to provide seamless navigation. Route Map needs to installed at the entrance of the New Building Complex. Please refer to Annexe Route Map

Very few changes are required to be made can be incorporated immediately.

3.1. Block A

- Ramp provided with proper gradient and grab bars on both ends.
- Door of entry to the library-wide enough for a wheelchair to pass easily.
- All five blocks are interconnected.

Judges Library

Observations:

- Library is well designed with sufficient natural lighting throughout the day.
- There is no directional signage to the library. Refer 1.3 Pathways for details
- Aisle space below the racks is appropriate and provides for smooth movement of the wheelchair.
- The arrangement of the study tables and their configuration allows adequate space for usability and movement for wheelchair bound persons.
- The study tables have a clear knee space.
- Washrooms were found to be accessible and as per the Guidelines.
- The height of the drinking units and a step up, make it inaccessible to a wheelchair bound person. Refer to Drinking Fountain
- The staff is not aware of the assistive devices and software required for converting documents into accessible format.

Recommendation (s):

- The height of the drinking water units should be reduced and brought to a ground level with a levelled height making it accessible to wheelchair bound persons.
- Signages should be as per Guidelines. Refer Signage
- Tactile map should be installed at the entrance at a height of 120 mm which can aid the visually impaired. Refer Pathways
- Inside the library
  - Library should be made as accessible as possible using the following guidelines
  - The catalogues must be available in accessible formats
  - Clear and easy-to-read signs with pictograms must be provided
  - A certain number of tables and computer workstations should be adapted for persons in wheelchairs.
  - Shelves must ideally be reachable from a wheelchair

- Uco Bankbstructed aisles between bookcases must be provided and wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs and one person not on a wheelchair.
- At least one computer must face outward and not against the wall since people with autism spectrum disorders find it disturbing to have people walking behind them.

- Information Desk and Circulation desk
  - Induction loop system for hearing impaired persons must be provided here
- Accessible Documents
  - People, who are blind, have low vision, dyslexic and other disabilities require reading material in "accessible formats". Under the recently amended Copyright Act, libraries can convert books and catalogues into accessible formats, free of cost and without requiring permission from publishers. These can then be distributed in physical and electronic form (including over the Internet) to persons with disabilities. Examples of accessible formats for persons with different disabilities is given below –
    - Magnified print formats with appropriate colour contrast for low vision persons opportunity to ambition
    - Digital format using text to speech format, e.g., Digital Talking Books, Video recordings with text or in sign language for deaf persons.
- Assistive Aids and Equipment
  - Libraries need to be equipped with some or all of the following assistive aids / equipment in order to ensure accessibility.
    - Scanner
    - Screen Reader
    - Screen Magnification Software
    - Braille Translating Software
    - Braille Embosser
    - Tactile Printer
- Training and Sensitization
  - Adequate training and sensitization must be given to library staff to ensure that they are able to interact with PWDs.
  - The library should have at least one staff member well-versed with methods of interaction with persons with disabilities. This person should be familiar with sign language and also be responsible for providing any specific assistance required, such as guiding them to print out books in Braille, etc.

3.2. Block B (Gr + 8 Floors)

- Lift provided makes access to all floors easy.
- Tactile flooring is present at the entrance of the lift.
- No signage or map to guide the easy movement of wheelchair bound persons, visually impaired and other PWD.
- Ramp has been provided with a proper gradient and grab bars on both ends.

Filing Counter (1st Floor)

Observations & Recommendation

- Entrance door to the filing counter is wide enough to allow for a wheelchair to pass.
- Adequate space inside for usability and movement for wheelchair bound persons.
- Counter height is too high for a wheelchair bound person to access.
- No proper signage or fonts used.
- However, a visually challenged person might face a challenge in accessing this. Braille markings can make the files accessible to blind

Section Office

Observations:

- Entrance door to the section office is wide enough to allow entry to wheelchairs.
- Corridors are wide.
- No proper signage.

Recommendation (s):

Refer: Pathways, Signage, Route map

Staircase

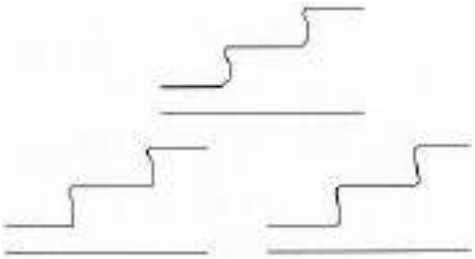
Observations:

- No tactile warning strips at the start or the end of the staircase.
- Hand rail provided on only one side of the stair.
- Door handles of the emergency exit doors are as per the guidelines.

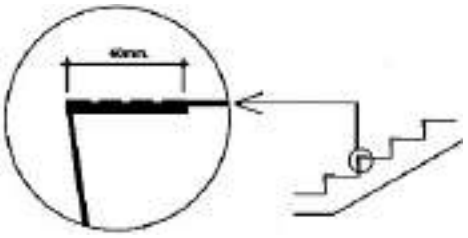
Recommendation (s)

- Sharp edges and overhanging nosing should not be used for treads.
- Nosing should be flush or rounded and should not project more than 40 mm.

- When the configuration of the nosing cannot be modified, slip-resistant strip should be applied to the nosing as an alternative solution.
- Slip-resistant strips should be 40 mm wide and should not extent more than 1 mm above the tread surface.
- To guide people with sight problems, the colour of the strips should contrast with that of the stairs.



Recommended nosing types



Nosing

Tactile marking

A textural marking strip should be placed at the top and bottom of the stairs and at intermediate landings to alert sightless people as to the location of the stairs.

- The tactile marking strip should be at least 0.60 m wide and should extend over the full width of the stairs.
- To guide users with poor vision, the colour of the strip should contrast with the surrounding surface
- Emergency stairs should be identified by tactile markings.

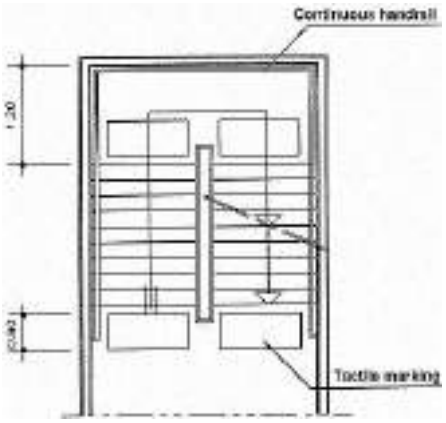


Figure 1: Tactile Marking

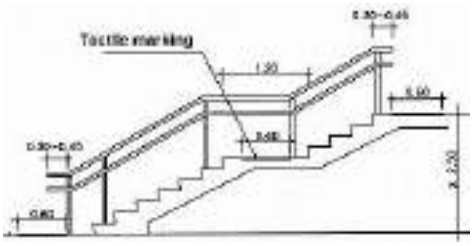
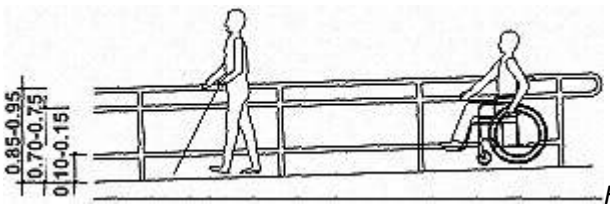


Figure 2: Tactile Marking

Railings and Handrails

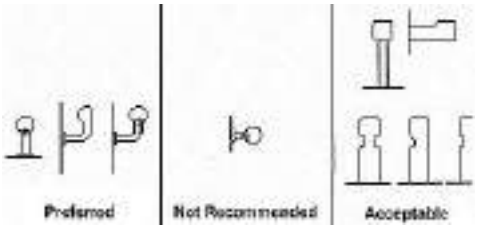
- Height
  - To facilitate use by ambulant disabled and elderly people, handrails should be mounted between 0.85 m and 0.95 m above the finished floor level.
  - For the benefit of wheelchair users, a second handrail can be mounted between 0.70 m and 0.75 m from the floor.
  - To facilitate use by children and short people, a third handrail can be mounted at a height of 0.60 m.
  - To guide sightless people using a long cane, a rail should be mounted at a height between 0.10 m and 0.15 m; or a low curb should be installed at a height between 50 mm and 75 mm.

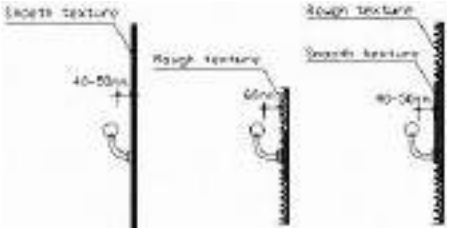


Height of Handrail

- Mounting
  - Railings should be securely attached to the wall or to a supporting structure so as to withstand heavy loads.
  - Railings should not end abruptly but extend to the floor or blend into the wall so as not to create a hazard for sightless people.
- Form
  - Handrails should allow a firm and easy grip.
  - Circular cross-sections with a diameter of 40 mm are preferable.
  - Sharp edges should be avoided.
  - Handrails should continue uninterrupted (except for doorways) on both sides and around the landing.
  - Handrails should extend horizontally for a distance between 0.30 m and 0.45 m at the top and bottom of stairs and ramps, except in places where extensions could obstruct the pedestrian flow
  - For stairs or ramps more than 3.00 m wide, a continuous intermediate handrail could be provided.

- For emergency exit stairs or ramps, a contrasting tactile strip at least 0.90 m long should be applied to the top and bottom edges of the handrail to alert the partially sighted.
- A contrasting colour is recommended for handrails to alert people with sight problems.





3.3. Block C

- Wellness Centre
- Medical Centre
- Conference Room
- Multipurpose Room

Wellness Centre

Observations:

- Entrance door is wide enough for a wheelchair to enter.
- Shower room partitions have bene done using toughened glass and with grab bars.
- Tactile markings are absent.

Recommendation (s):

- The existing glass partitions in the shower room should be replaced with proper brick walls with a proper opening. Appropriate width for door opening and grab bars as per the universal guidelines.
- Tactile markings at the entrance which will help the PWD and the visually impaired.





Mattress can be an impediment to small front wheel of wheelchair and a person can trip



Changing cubicles have thin walls which cannot mount handrails



Changing room just wide enough for a wheelchair to enter





Equipment ideally placed for easy access

Canteen

Observations:

- The height of the cash-cum-coupon counter is too high for a wheelchair bound person.
- Entrance door is wide enough for a wheelchair bound person to enter.
- No tactile markings at the entrance.
- Space inside the canteen is appropriate for wheelchair mobility.
- Dining tables were found to be of an appropriate height with proper leg space below for wheelchair bound person.



The food counter is at the right height for wheelchair user

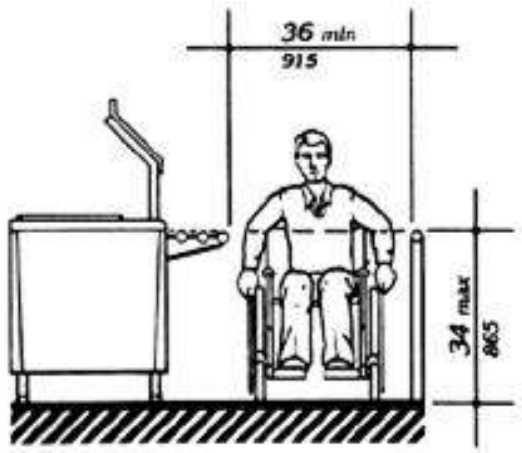


Space inside the canteen is appropriate for wheelchair mobility



The Counter is high for wheelchair user

Recommendation (s):



Accessible Counter

- Accessible counter is at least 36" long and no more than 36" above the floor
- Provide a 30" by 48" space in front of the sales or service counter to accommodate a wheelchair or electric scooter
- It is also possible to provide an auxiliary counter nearby or to use a folding shelf or area next to the counter, if doing so is readily achievable.
- In addition to having a maximum height of 36 inches, all accessible sales and service counters must have a clear floor space in front of the accessible surface that permits a customer using a wheelchair to pull alongside.

Medical Centre

Observations:

- All the cabin doors were found to be of proper width to allow a wheelchair to enter.
- Signages were placed at an improper height and different font sizes were used.
- No tactile markings present at the entrance.
- Space inside each cabin was appropriate for a wheelchair to manoeuvre easily.

Recommendation (s):

- Signages should be provided at a proper height with proper fonts, making it easier for a PWD to comprehend.
- Tactile markings should be provided at the entrance.

Conference Room





The Conference Room is spacious and well lit

Observation:

a) The conference room was found to be accessible with proper width provided for the entrance door.

b) Height of the table is appropriate with sufficient leg room for a wheelchair bound person.

c) Height of the signage is improper.

Recommendation (s):

Seating

- Accessible seating should be made available throughout the conference room to ensure participants with disabilities can select a location of their choice, just like other attendees.
- Create space for people who use scooters to remain seated in their scooter seats if desired. If an individual prefers to use a regular seat, provide space for keeping their scooter next to their seat.
- For people with hearing disabilities, include a seating plan with space for the interpreters.

Spacing and aisles

- If one in 10 participants is likely to use a mobility aid the meeting room should provide for about one-third extra space. Increase this space proportionately if the percentage is higher than 10%.
- Aisles should be at least three to six feet wide to accommodate the movement of people with mobility aids. Both vertical and horizontal aisles should be provided as far as possible to increase access.
- in the back of the event area, provide space where the participants can stretch or stand.
- If the meeting or presentation involves the use of a round table, consider the feasibility of semi-round seating to enable all attendees to look directly at the speaker or the screen.
- Mark the passage areas that should remain clear of any objects. Remind the attendees at the beginning of the event to not block the pathways with any bags or personal items.

Other considerations

- For participants with sensitivity to fluorescent lights, use incandescent lamps in a dedicated section.
- To protect participants with sensitivity to electrical charge, provide a separate area outside the conference room to recharge batteries.

Multipurpose Room

Observations:

- No dedicated space has been assigned for wheelchair bound person.
- Ramp was found to be of an appropriate gradient. However, grab bars were absent on both sides.
- Width of the entrance door provides smooth entrance for wheelchairs.
- No proper signage.





Ramp adequate, the black box is an obstruction needs to be removed





Sitting arrangement please refer to the Auditorium section below

Recommendation (s):

- Dedicates space should be allotted for wheelchair bound persons which is closer to the entrance or the exit doors.
- Grab bars should be provided at least on one side of the ramp leading to the stage.
- Signages should be fixed at a proper height with an appropriate font size.
- Tactile marking should be provided which will help the visually impaired to navigate smoothly.

Auditorium

Observations:

a) Dedicated space hasn't been allotted for wheelchair bound persons.

b) No proper signage.

c) A small ramp at the rear end of the auditorium is constructed. However, the gradient is inappropriate and can prove to be dangerous for a wheelchair bound person and other PWD.

d) Access to the auditorium has doors of an appropriate width, providing a smooth entrance and exit of wheelchairs.

e) Staircase leading to the stage on both sides makes the stage inaccessible for wheelchair bound person.

f) Staircase leading to the greenroom makes it inaccessible for wheelchair bound person.





Very steep





Portable Ramp required







Green Room





Recommendation (s):

- Wheelchair users can only be allotted seat in the front row. Steps make it difficult
- Wheelchair spaces must be provided as below:
  - four to 25 seats require one wheelchair space.
  - 26 to 50 requires two spaces.
  - a venue with 51 to 150 seats must have four spaces.
  - 151 to 300 requires five spaces.
  - 301 to 500 requires six spaces.

- To ensure that every patron has the same opportunity to see the show, wheelchair spaces must be dispersed throughout the venue. They need to have the same variation in sight lines available to other patrons. These spaces also need to adjoin to an accessible route for emergency exits.
- It's preferred for wheelchair accessible spaces to be provided in pairs. Every wheelchair space must have a companion seat adjacent to it. The companion seats may be either fixed or removable, to allow for maximum flexibility. The companion seats must also be at the same floor or elevation as the wheelchair seats to allow for shoulder-to-shoulder alignment.
- Other Accessibility Concerns
  - Wheelchair accessibility is not the only concern to keep in mind when designing a space. At least five percent of aisle seats in any space must have retractable or folding armrests. It's worth noting that the percentage addresses only aisle seats and not the total number of seats in the venue.
  - These seats make it easier for people who have difficulty walking to get in and out. The designated aisle seats must be the ones closest located to accessible routes in and out of the auditorium. They must be marked with approved insignia to make them easier to find.

Refer:

d) Washroom

e) Water Units

f) Signage

g) Standard Guidelines

h) Safety and exit policy for recommendations on emergency and evacuation.

Lounge/Waiting Area & Dining Hall

Observations:

- Entrance doors have a proper width to allow wheelchairs to enter.
- Appropriate space for a wheelchair bound person to manoeuvre.
- Table height and leg space is appropriate for a wheelchair bound person.
- No grab bars were found in the washrooms.

Recommendation (s):

a) Grab bars should be provided in the washrooms at an appropriate height.

Refer:

- Washroom
  - Standard Guidelines.

Guest Accommodations

- The Guest accommodations were accessible require minimum changes
- The rooms were spacious
- Beds and furniture at ideal height
- Bathroom large, door wide enough to allow a wheelchair.
- There were no grab bars
- There was a glass partition that does not allow wheelchair user to go inside.





Doors wide, spacious for mobility





Bed and dining table of acceptable height



There is a lot of furniture that impedes / obstucts. Based on the requirement of the accommodee they can be removed



Thin non slip mattress needs to replace the existing one which is an obstruction to wheelchair and a trip hazard. Door wide for wheelchair



Glass partition. Door not wide enough and the area is small for wheelchair user. No grab bar



Please look at Wash basin annexe

Recommendation (s):

- There are total thirteen rooms in the guest house of which at least 2 rooms must be reserved for Pwd. They must be made accessible.
- Existing rooms grab bar in every toilet can allow people with non-ambulatory disabilities to use.
- Details of accessible toilet below.

Annexure

Ramps

General

- An exterior location is preferred for ramps. Indoor ramps are not recommended because they take up a great deal of space.
- Ideally, the entrance to a ramp should be immediately adjacent to the stairs.

Ramp configuration (1)

- Ramps can have one of the following configurations:

  (a) Straight run (fig. 1);

  (b) 90 turn (fig. 2);

  (c) Switch back or 180 turn (fig. 3).

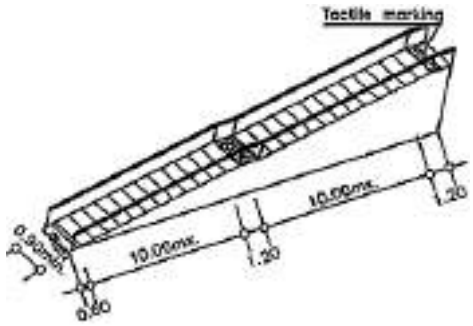


Figure 3:

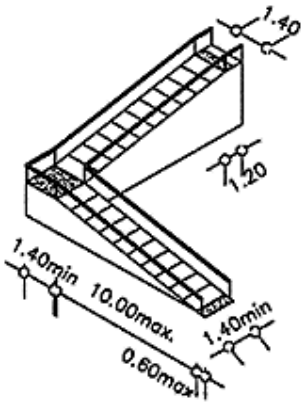


Figure 4

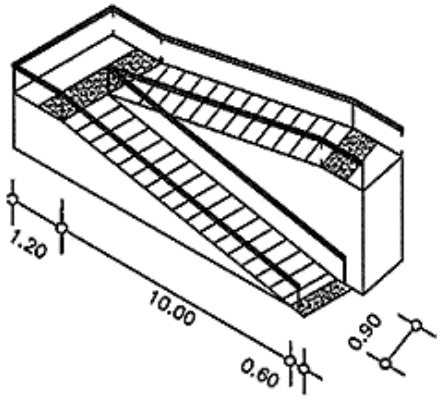


Figure 5

Width

- Width varies according to use, configuration and slope.
- The minimum width should be 0.90 m.

Slope

- The maximum recommended slope of ramps is 1:20. Steeper slopes may be allowed in special cases depending on the length to be covered (fig. 4).

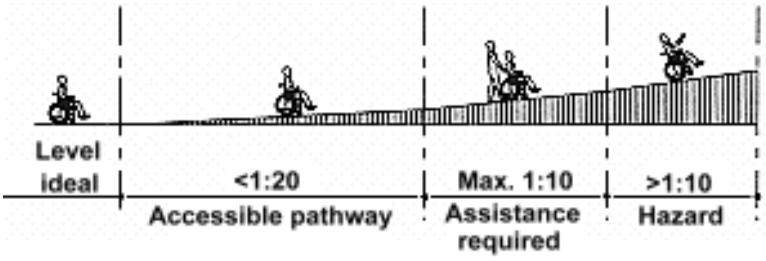


Figure 6

Maximum slope	*Maximum length*	*Maximum rise*
1:20 i.e., 5%	-	-
1:16 i.e., 6%	8 m	0.50 m
1:14 i.e., 7%	5 m	0.35 m
1:12 i.e., 8%	2 m	0.15 m
1:10 i.e., 10%	1.25 m	0.12 m
1:08 i.e., 12%	0.5 m	0.06 m

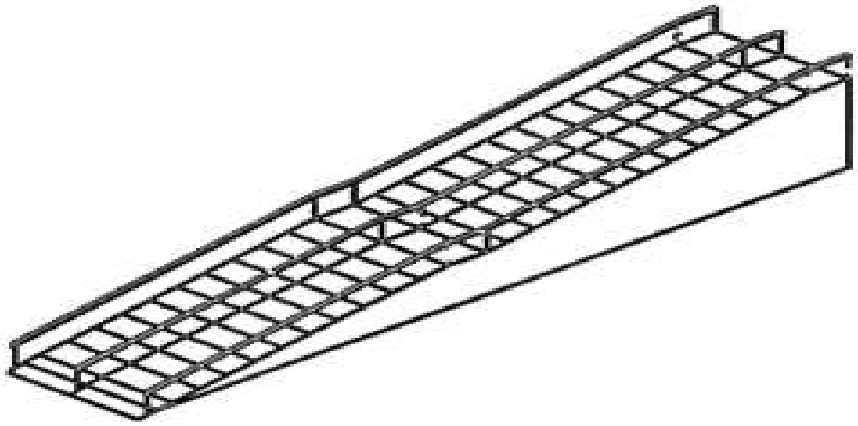
Landings

- Ramps should be provided with landings for resting, manoeuvring and avoiding excessive speed.
- Landings should be provided every 10.00 m, at every change of direction and at the top and bottom of every ramp.
- The landing should have a minimum length of 1.20 m and a minimum width equal to that of the ramp

Handrail

- A protective handrail at least 0.40 m high must be placed along the full length of ramps.

- For ramps more than 3.00 m wide, an intermediate handrail could be installed (fig. 5).
- The distance between handrails when both sides are used for gripping should be between 0.90 m and 1.40 m (fig. 5).



Surface

- The ramp surface should be hard and non-slip.
- Carpets should be avoided.

Tactile marking

- A coloured textural indication at the top and bottom of the ramp should be placed to alert sightless people as to the location of the ramp.
- The marking strip width should not be less than 0.60 m.

Drainage n Adequate drainage should be provided to avoid accumulation of water.

Obstacles

- The same clearance considerations that apply to pathways apply to ramps (see Obstructions).

Mechanical Ramps

- Mechanical ramps can be used in large public buildings but are not recommended for use by persons with physical impairments.
- If the ramp is to be used by a wheelchair-confined person, the slope should not exceed 1:12.
- The maximum width should be 1.00 m to avoid slipping.

Existing Constructions

If the topography or structure of the existing building is restrictive, minor variations of gradient are allowed as a function of the ramp length:

Maximum slope	Maximum length	Maximum rise
1:20 i.e., 9%	-	-
1:16 i.e., 6%	8 m	0.50 m
1:14 i.e., 7%	5 m	0.35 m
1:12 i.e., 8%	2 m	0.15 m
1:10 i.e., 10%	1.25 m	0.12 m
1:08 i.e., 12%	0.5 m	0.06 m

- A non-slip surface finish should be added to slippery ramps.

Curb Ramp

- A curb ramp can be installed at all places where there is a change in level on pedestrian paths or cross paths. To ensure the safety of persons with vision impairment, curb ramps should be located out of the usual line of the pedestrian flow.
- Dimensions –
  - The minimum width of a curb ramp should be 900mm, exclusive of flared sides
  - The slope should not be more than 1:10 and the width not less than 900 mm
  - Slope changes between curb ramp and pavement should be gradual to prevent he front wheels of a wheelchair from getting caught.
  - A landing at the top of the curb ramp provides a level area for wheelchair users to change direction after ascending the ramp. The landing should be at least 1200 mm wide

Portable Ramp

Types of Portable Wheelchair Ramps

These can include:

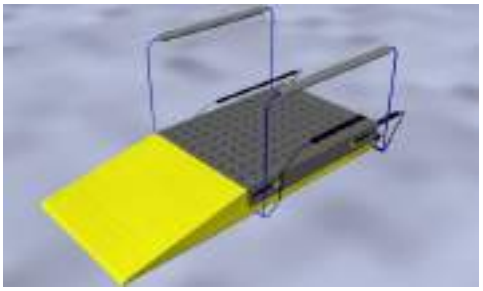
- **Doorway Ramps**: Usually solid or panel ramps, these come in slightly different lengths to cover one to just a few steps.
- **Shower Ramps**: Designed to get rid of the slight step that is generally in front of walk-in showers, these ramps are small, short and often can blend in with your bathroom floor.
- **Exterior Access Ramps**: To help a wheelchair user get in and out of the home, these ramps are longer and can be purchased in materials such aluminium, which is sturdy and can often come in sections to make it easier to customize the length.

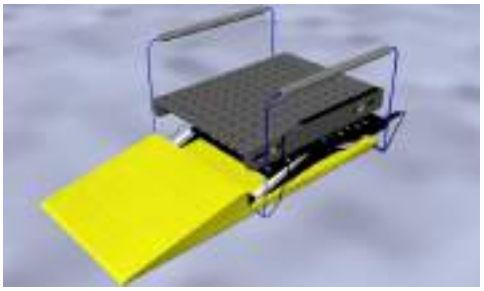
- **Threshold Ramps**: Used to bridge raised thresholds, these ramps are usually shorter, very light and offer only a slight raise in a doorway.

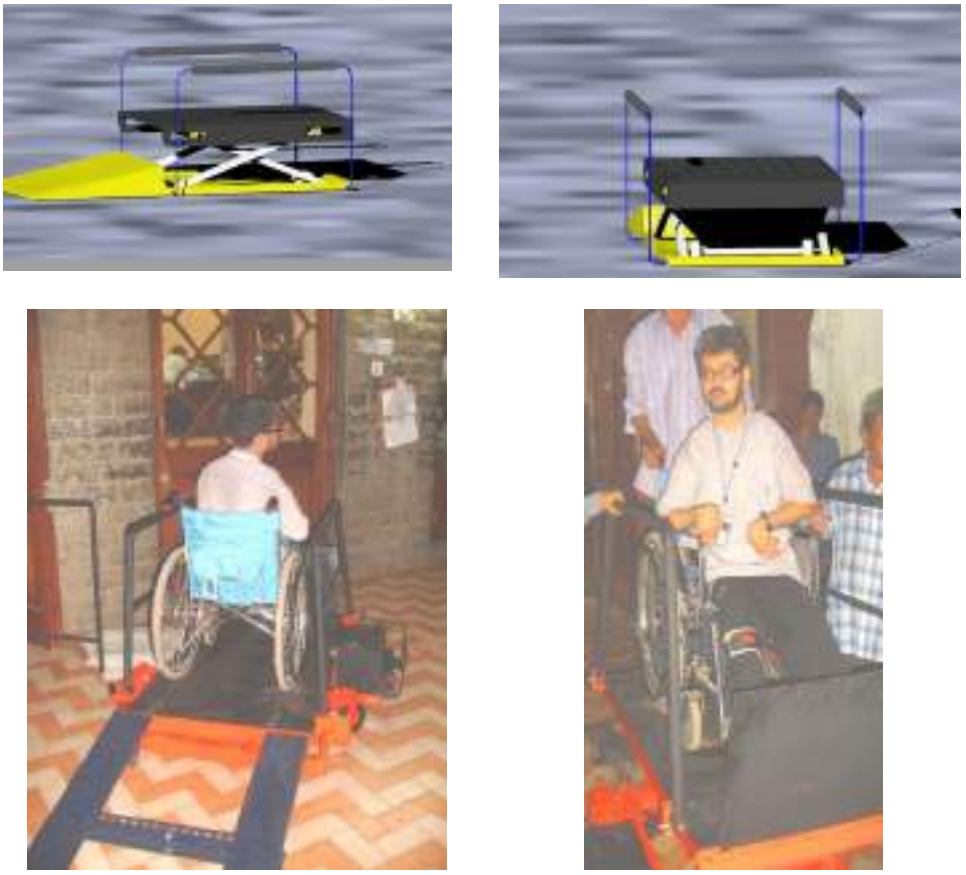
Max/min length mm	Inner width mm	Outer width max. mm	Width folded max. mm	Height folded max. mm	Max load kg	Weight kg
550	210	235	-	-	200	1.5
1160	210	235	-	-	200	3.1
840/580	190	235	-	-	200	2.8
1130/750	190	235	-	-	200	3.7
1960/1160	190	235	-	-	150	5.6
1930/870	170	235	-	-	150	6.5
2820/1160	170	235	-	-	125	8.2
1950/760	190	235	-	-	150	6.8
2700/1010	190	235	-	-	150	8.6
1040/570	210	235	-	-	200	3.8
1440/760	210	235	-	-	200	4.9
1940/1010	210	235	-	-	150	6.3
1000	770	880	-	-	325	9.7
1250	770	880	-	-	325	12.1
1500	770	880	-	-	325	14.4
2000	770	880	-	-	325	19.1
3000	770	880	-	-	200	28.6
1500/780	770	880	-	-	325	17.5
2000/1030	770	880	-	-	325	22.2
2500/1280	770	880	-	-	200	26.9
3000/1530	770	880	-	-	200	31.7
1000/520	820	870	-	-	400	11.0
1600/850	820	870	-	-	400	18.0
2000/1050	820	870	-	-	400	21.0
2500/1300	820	870	-	-	400	25.0
2800/1450	820	870	-	-	400	29.0
1830/1120	760	820	405	72	325	16.4
2130/1270	760	820	405	72	325	18.9
2440/1430	760	820	405	72	325	21.4
3050/1730	760	820	405	72	200	26.4
935	760	776	398	85	350	7.8
1185	760	776	398	85	350	9.0
1485	760	776	398	85	350	11.4
1785	760	776	398	85	350	13.4
2085	760	776	398	85	350	15.8
1635	760	786	273	125	350	13.4



In 2004 Bombay High Court Portable Hydraulic ramp was installed for accessing court rooms







Portable Hydraulic Ramp installed in Bombay High Court

Elevators

General

- The accessible elevator should serve all floors normally reached by the public.
- Key-operated elevators should be used only in private facilities or when an elevator operator is present.
- Wide elevator cabs are preferable to long ones.

Elevator cab

- The minimum internal elevator dimensions, allowing for one wheelchair passenger alone, are 1.00 m x 1.30 m (fig. 5).

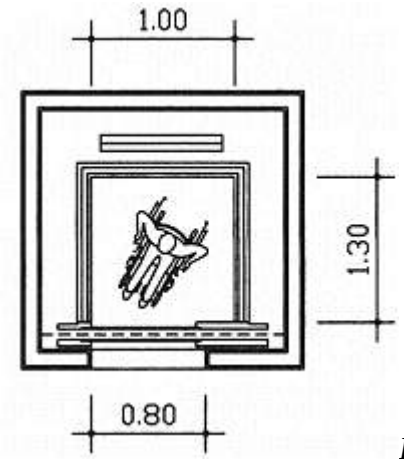


Figure 7

- The door opening should not be less than 0.80 m.
- The inside of the elevator should have a handrail on three sides mounted 0.80 to 0.85 m from the floor (fig. 6).

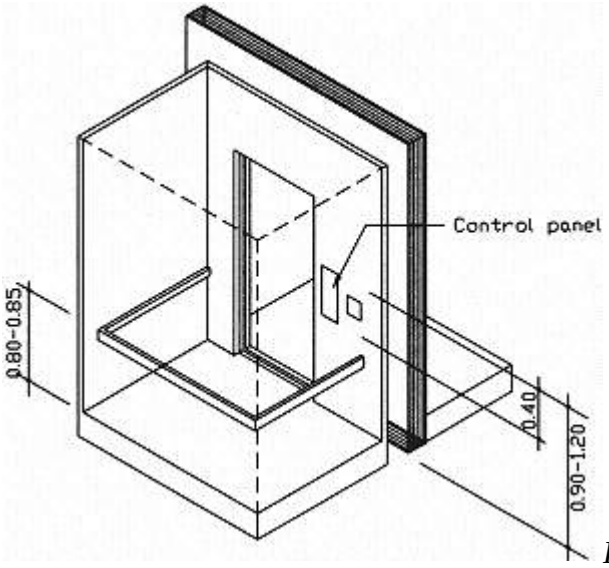


Figure 8

- The maximum tolerance for stop precision should be 20 mm.

Control panel

- The control panel can be mounted at one of the alternative locations shown in figure 7.

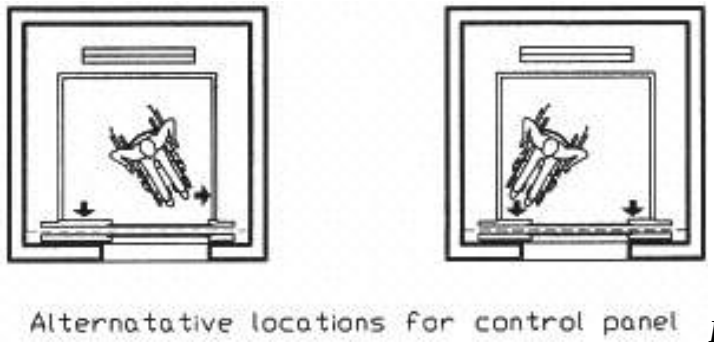


Figure 9

- For ease of reach, the control panel should be mounted 0.90 m to 1.20 m from the floor (fig. 6).
- Control buttons should be in an accessible location and illuminated. Their diameter should be no smaller than 20 mm.
- The numerals on the floor selector buttons should be embossed so as to be easily identifiable by touch.

Call buttons

- For ease of reach, call buttons should be mounted 0.90 m to 1.20 m from the floor (fig. 8). 3.5 Floor identifiers
- Tactile numerals should be placed on both sides of the door jambs at an approximate height of 1.50 m to help a lone sightless passenger to identify the floor reached (fig. 8). 3.6 Hall signal
- The elevator hall signal should be placed at an approximate height of 1.80 m (fig. 8).

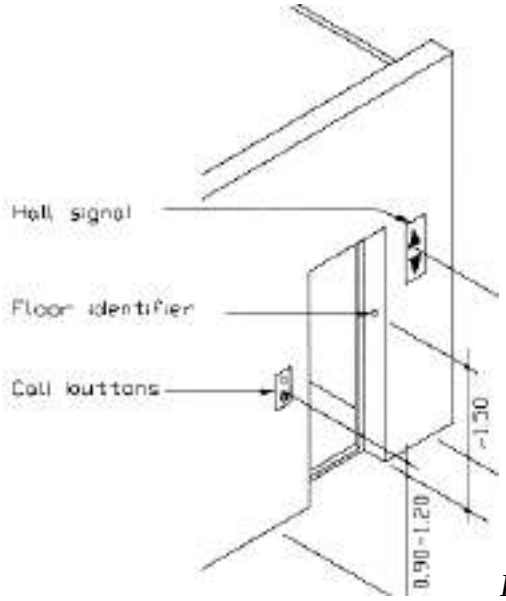


Figure 10

Door re-opening activators

- The door opening interval should be no less than five seconds. Re-opening activators should be provided.

Audio-visual signals

- The elevator should signal arrival at each floor by means of a bell and a light to alert sightless and hearing-impaired passengers simultaneously.

Floor surface

- The floor of the elevator and the area in front of the elevator on each floor should have a non-skid resilient surface or a low-pile fixed carpet.

Colour

- The colour of the elevator door should contrast with the surrounding surface so as to be easily distinguishable by persons with visual impairments.

EXISTING CONSTRUCTIONS

- The minimum acceptable size of an existing elevator cab, allowing for a single wheelchair passenger, is 0.95 m x 1.25 m. Smaller cabs should be replaced.
- The minimum acceptable width of an existing elevator door opening is 0.75 m.
- Call buttons and control panels mounted higher than the recommended height may be left in place if they are within 1.40 m of the floor, this being the maximum reach of a wheelchair user.

- Controls mounted higher than 1.40 m should be replaced.
- Where there are two identical control panels, only one need be replaced

Lighting

- Partially sighted people look for orientation guides and high-contrast objects within the close-up range and therefore, large spaces can impose significant problems to them. Orientation cues such as changes in illumination level, contrasts and unique patterns help visually impaired people to make maximum use of their residual vision and to distinguish pathways and locations.

Area	Limiting Iluminance	Minimum Glare Rating	Colour Rendering
Entrance Hall & Lobby	200 lux	22	80
Reception Desk	300 lux	19	80
Corridors & Circulation Areas	100 lux	25	80
Stairs and Ramps	150 lux	25	80
Canteen & Cafeterias	200 lux	22	80
Classrooms	300 lux	19	80
Computer Room	300 lux	19	80
Hostel Rooms	300 lux	19	80
Library	300 lux	19	80

- Recommendations from British Standard EN-12464-1 and Lighting Guide 5 (produced by Society of Light and Lighting, UK) are given as a reference (as detailed below).

  The following general points should be considered with regard to lighting

- **Illuminance**
  - Sudden changes in illuminance should be avoided to prevent adaptation difficulties.
  - Avoid sudden patterns of light and dark on the floors and walls
  - Ensure stairs, ramps and slopes are well lit so that they can be easily identified when approaching in either direction
- **Glare Rating**
  - Most users, prefer natural lighting provided it does not create problem of glares.
  - Avoid direct and reflected glare by selecting appropriate finishes and luminaries

- **Colour and Luminance Contrast**
  - Persons with visual impairment need colours to contrast sharply against the background and successfully identify walls, objects and obstacles. Adequate visual contrast is achieved by careful selection of surfaces and materials that not only contrast in colour but also have sufficient luminance contrast between them.
  - Light Reflectance Values (LRV) can be used to ascertain adequate contrast. An LRV difference of 30 percent is required between surfaces/ objects for them to be distinguishable by most people with visual impairments.
    - The following should be considered in terms of lighting to assist Persons with visual impairment
    - Ensure colour and luminance contrast between different areas.
      - → Critical Surfaces (walls, ceiling and floor)
      - → Washroom fixtures and critical surfaces in washrooms
      - → Nosing and riders/ treads on steps
      - → Handrails and background walls
      - → Doors and surrounding walls
      - → Switches, sockets and background walls
      - → Signage and background sign frame/ wall
    - Light coloured surfaces have a high reflectance allowing light to flow around a space. Dark surfaces have the opposite effect and can reduce illuminance and luminance. Light and dark surfaces will add interest to a space and also provide adequate contrast to allow people with visual impairment to identify junctions between surfaces.
    - Install luminaries that have a Colour Rendering Index (CRI)of at least Ra80*** (CRI is a quantitative measure of the ability of a light source to reproduce the colours of various objects faithfully in comparison with an ideal or natural light source)

Signage

- Design Considerations
  - General
    - Signage includes direction signs, signs of locality, street names and numbering, information signs, etc.
    - All types of signs should be visible, clear, simple, easy to read and understand, and properly lit at night.
    - In general, signs should not be placed behind glass because of possible reflection.

- Signage placed on the pedestrian path of travel are considered obstructions; thus, they should be detectable.

- International symbol of accessibility
  - Accessible spaces and facilities should be identified by the international symbol of accessibility (fig. 9).
  - The symbol is composed of a wheelchair figure with either a square background or a square border (fig. 10).
  - Contrasting colours should be used to differentiate the figure from the background. The commonly employed colours are white for the figure and blue for the background.
  - The wheelchair figure should always be seen from drawn facing right.
  - For completely accessible buildings, it is enough to have one explanatory sign at the entrance.
- Direction signs
  - Graphic or written directions should be used to indicate clearly the type and location of the available facility (fig. 11).
  - Directional signs need not be excessive in number, but they should be placed at main entrances and doors and in places where changes in direction or level occur.
- Maps and information panels
  - Maps and information panels at building entrances, along roads, and on public buildings should be placed at a height between 0.90 m and 1.80 m (fig. 12).
- Installation
- Signs can be wall-mounted, suspended or pole-mounted.
  - Wall-Mounted signs, such as those indicating room numbers, should be placed with the centre line at a height between 1.40 m and 1.60m from the finished floor level.
  - Overhanging signs, overhanging signs should allow a minimum clearance of 2.00 m
- Shape of signboards
  - Information signboards should be rectangular.
  - Warning signboards should be triangular.
  - Interdictory signboards should be circular.

- Colour
  - The colour of signs should contrast with the surrounding surface so as to be clearly distinguishable.
  - The commonly used colours are: white, black, yellow, red, blue and green.
  - The colour combinations red/green and yellow/blue should not be used in order to avoid confusing colour- blind persons.
- Surface
  - The sign surface should be processed to prevent glare.
  - Engraved texts should be avoided unless they are coloured. Relief prints are advisable.
  - Key plans, orientation signs and push buttons in lifts must have a text in Braille or in relief.
- Lettering
  - The size of letters should be in proportion to the reading distance (fig. 13).
  - Character width-to-height ratio should be between 3:5 and 1:1 and the character stroke width-to-height ratio should be between 1:5 and 1:10 (fig. 14).
  - The letters and signs should preferably be raised at least 1 mm from the background, to enable sightless people to read the information using the tips of their fingers.
  - The smallest letter type should not be less than 15 mm.
  - Normal spacing between words and letters should be used.

Existing Constructions

- The international symbol of accessibility should be added to mark accessible spaces and facilities.
- Directional signs should be added to indicate clearly the location and function of accessible spaces and facilities.
- Signs that do not comply with the above design requirements should be modified or replaced.



Figure 11



Figure 12



Figure 13

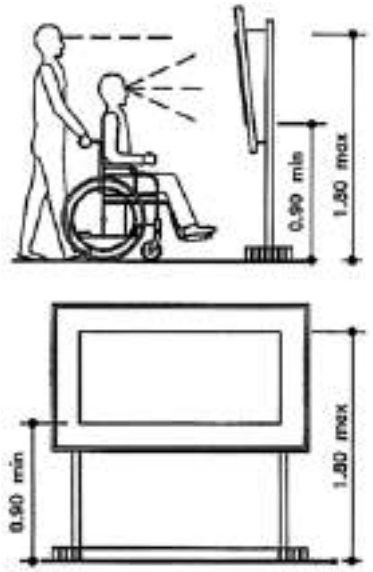


Figure 14

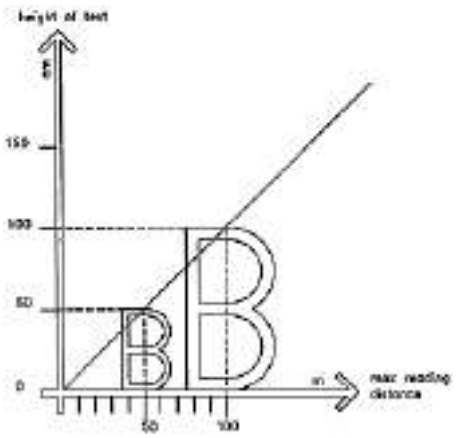


Figure 15

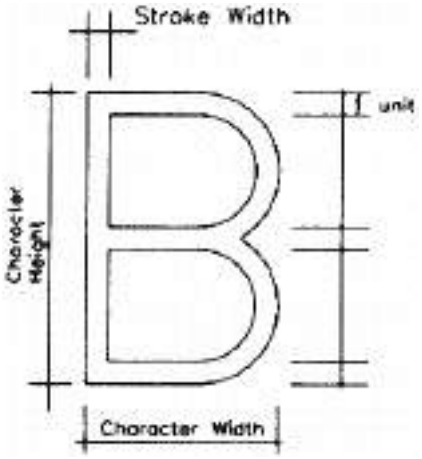


Figure 16

Washroom

There are 92 Gents and Ladies toilets in the entire Supreme Court premises. There are additional 43 disabled friendly toilets. There is a need for additional toilets for transgender persons. The Delhi government has directed all its departments, offices, district authorities, etc., to build separate and exclusive toilets for transgender people at their respective offices in the national capital. If the construction of toilets cannot be done immediately, the government has asked that toilets available for persons with disabilities (PwD) should be designated for use by transgender persons for the time being. Such toilets will display symbols for both PwDs and "T" for transgender persons.

Also number of toilets for male and female nee to allotted for the staff of the Supreme Court based on the employee roster based on gender as per the National Building Code. It is beyond the scope of this audit to cover the topic in detail.

National Building Code:

Sr No.	Sanitary Unit	For Public		For Staff	
		MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE
1.	Water Closet	One for every 100 persons upto 400 persons. Add 1 per every additional 250 persons or part thereof over 400 persons	Two for 100 persons upto 200 persons. Over 200 persons add 1 at the rate of 1 for every 100 persons	1 of every 15 persons. 2 for 16 to 30 persons. Add 1 for every additional 25 thereof	1 of every 12 persons. 2 for 13 to 25 persons. Add 1 for every additional 25 thereof
2.	Ablution Taps	One for every W. C.			
3.	Urinals	One for every 50 persons thereof.		One for upto 7 persons. Two for 7 to 20. Add 1 for every additional 25 persoms	

Accessible Washroom[2]

- One washroom can be converted into an accessible washroom, preferably on the ground floor and/or the first floor which can be used by all. There are two cubicles, one western and other Indian style both can be combined to make it disabled friendly

[2]*Please note as each bathroom is different closer inspection has to be done prior any changes*

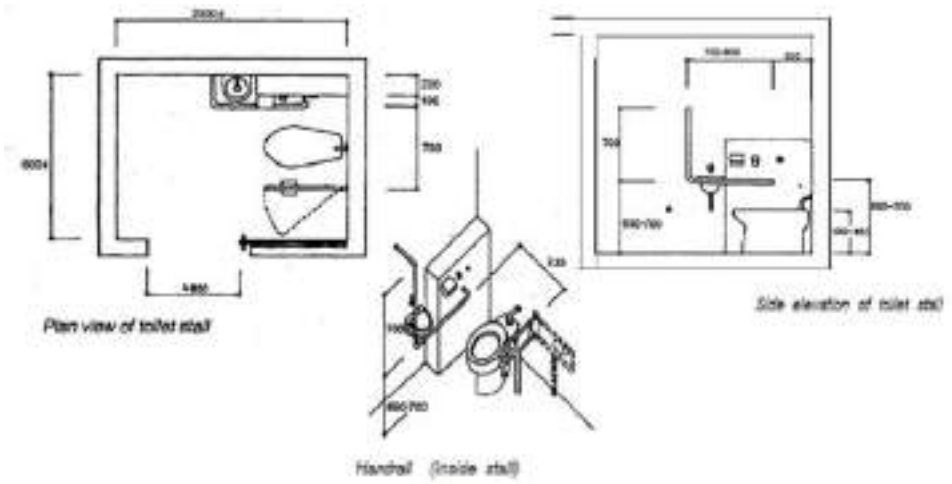


Figure 17

- All toilet blocks must have one cubicle suitable for use by persons with ambulatory disabilities.

The toilet should have:

1. Minimum internal dimensions of 2200 X 2000 mm minimum (Layout Figure below);
2. The layout of the fixtures in the toilet should be such that there is a clear manoeuvring space of 1800mm x 1800mm in front of the water closet and wash basin in the accessible toilet unit (Wheelchair manoeuvring Figure below);
3. All fixtures and utilities should provide a clear space of 900mm x 1200 mm for wheelchair users to access them;
4. Have clear space of not less than 900 mm wide next to the water closet;
5. Flush - Must have a lever-type flush control fixed towards the wheel chair transfer side to facilitate flushing after transfer.
6. Have the toilet roll dispenser and hand water faucet mounted below the grab bars and at not more than 300 mm from the front edge of the seat and at a height between 50 mm and 200 mm from the top of the water closet seat;
7. Be equipped with a cloth hook mounted on a side wall not more than 1200 mm from the floor and projecting not more than 40 mm from the wall; and
8. Where possible, be equipped with a shelf of dimensions 400 mm x 200 mm fixed at a height of between 900 mm and 1000 mm from the floor

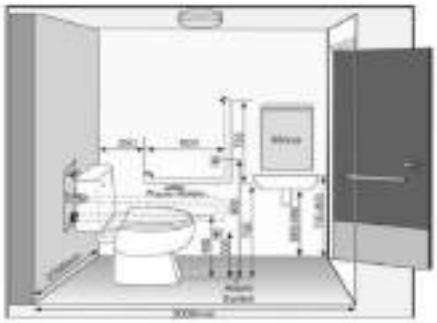


Figure 18

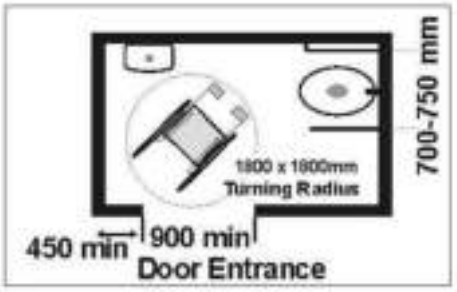


Figure 19
Wheelchair manoeuvring space in toilet

Toilet Doors

- Essential requirements for toilet door:
- The toilet door should be either an outward opening door or two-way opening door or a sliding type and should provide a clear opening width of at least 900mm
- Be provided with a horizontal pull-bar, at least 600 mm long, on the inside of the door, located so that it is 130 mm from the hinged side of the door and at a height of 1000 mm.
- Be capable of being locked from the inside by a device that is operable by one hand, activated by a force not more than 22N and which does not require fine finger control, tight grasping, pinching or twisting of the wrist.

Washbasin

- Dimensions 520 mm and 400 mm, so mounted the top edge is between 700 mm to 800mm from the floor; have a knee space of not less than 760 mm wide by 200 mm deep by 650-680 mm high;
- Lever type of handles are recommended

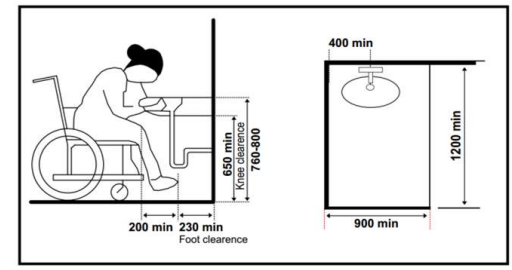


Figure 20 Washbasin Standard



Urinals

- At least one of the urinals in the Gents toilets on each floor should have grab bars (Figure below); installed on each side and in the front of the urinal to support ambulant Persons with Disabilities (for example, crutch users).
- The front bar is to provide chest support; the sidebars are for the user to hold on to while standing.
- Urinal with chest support grab bar 430 mm above the finish floor.
- A clear floor space 760 mm by 1220 mm should be provided in front of urinals to allow forward approach. Urinal shields (that do not extend beyond the front edge of the urinal rim) may be provided with 735 mm clearance between them
- Flush controls should: should either be lever type or automatic, and located on the transfer side of the water closet. The flush control should not be located more than 1000 mm from the floor; Be located not more than 1200 mm from the floor.
- Where urinals for the ambulatory disabled are provided, they should comply with the following as illustrated in the figure below.

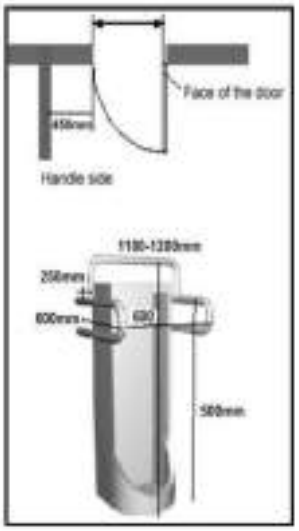


Figure 22: Urinal with chest support grab bar

Shower Area

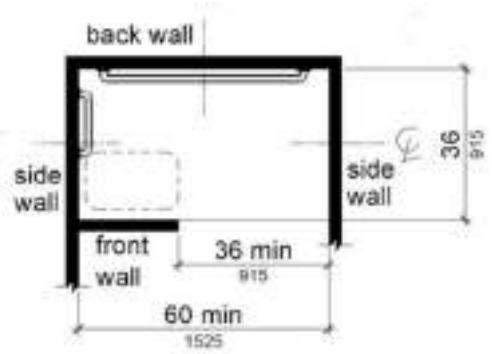


Figure 23: Roll in Shower

- Roll-in showers a short wall across part of the front of the shower where a seat is typically mounted. They also must adhere to the following:
- Must be minimum 60” x 36” from centre points of opposing sides
- Must be 36” from front wall to back wall - no construction tolerance is stated in the code
- 36” minimum opening at the entry of the shower from the top to floor
- Folding seat placed on front wall
- Grab bars provided on back wall and side wall opposite from compartment entry
- Mirrors: If existing mirrors are too high, they can be tilted or a full-length mirror can be installed on another wall.

Stairs

- General
  - Differences in level should be illuminated or minimized as much as possible for the comfort of disabled people.
  - A complementary ramped route, elevator or lift should be provided where there are steps in an otherwise accessible path.
  - All steps should be uniform.
  - Circular stairs and stepped landings should be avoided (fig. 22).
  - Open risers are not recommended.
- Width
  - The minimum width of a stairway should be 0.90 m for one-way traffic and 1.50 m for two-way traffic.

- For indoor stairs, the riser should be between 0.12 m and 0.18 m, and the tread between 0.28 m and 0.35 m.
- For outdoor stairs, the maximum riser should be 0.15 m and the minimum tread should be 0.30 m.
- Landing (fig. 23) (fig. 24)
  - An intermediate landing should be provided when the stairs cover a difference in level of more than 2.50 m.
  - The length of the landing should be at least 1.20 m extending along the full width of the stairs.
- Nosing (fig. 25)
  - Sharp edges and overhanging nosing should not be used for treads.
  - Nosing should be flush or rounded and should not project more than 40 mm.
- Handrails
  - Handrails must be installed on both sides of the stairs and around the landing for gripping (fig. 24).
  - For stairs more than 3.00 m wide, one or more intermediate handrails could be provided (fig. 26).
  - The distance between the handrails when both sides are used for gripping should be between 0.90 m and 1.40 m (fig. 5).
  - Handrails must extend a distance between 0.30 m and 0.45 m at the top and bottom of the stairs (see Railings and Handrails) (fig. 3).
- Tactile marking (fig. 23) (fig. 24)
  - A textural marking strip should be placed at the top and bottom of the stairs and at intermediate landings to alert sightless people as to the location of the stairs.
  - The tactile marking strip should be at least 0.60 m wide and should extend over the full width of the stairs.
  - To guide users with poor vision, the colour of the strip should contrast with the surrounding surface.
  - Landings, treads and nosing should be slip-resistant and free of projections.
  - Exterior stairs should be pitched forward at 10 mm per metre to drain surface water.
  - Slip-resistant stair nosing should be used to fix carpets on stairs.
- Emergency stairs
  - Emergency stairs should be identified by tactile markings.

- Mechanical stairs (escalators)
  - Mechanical stairs can be provided with an adaptable tread at least 1.20 m long, if they are to be used by persons confined to wheelchairs (fig. 27).
  - The edges of escalators should be painted in a contrasting colour for the benefit of poor- sighted users.

Existing Constructions

- When the configuration of the nosing cannot be modified, slip-resistant strip could be applied to the nosing as an alternative solution (fig. 28).
- Slip-resistant strips should be 40 mm wide and should not extent more than 1 mm above the tread surface.
- To guide people with sight problems, the colour of the strips should contrast with that of the stairs.

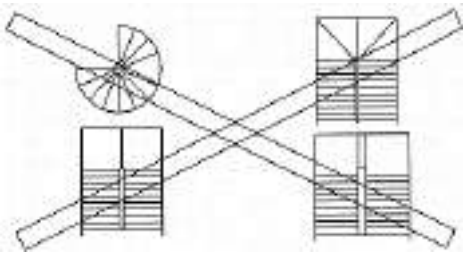


Figure 24

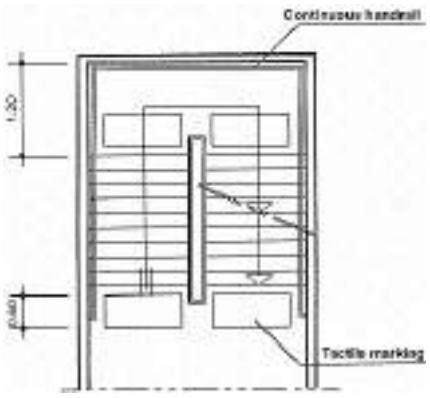


Figure 25

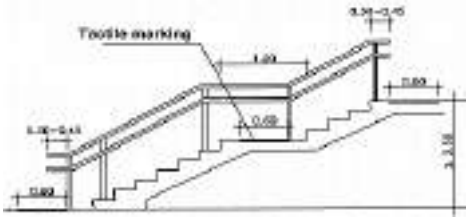


Figure 26

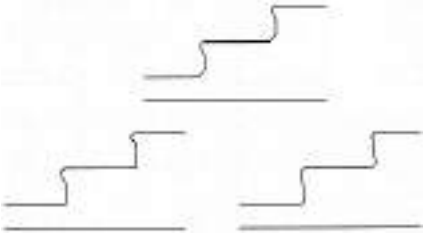


Figure 27

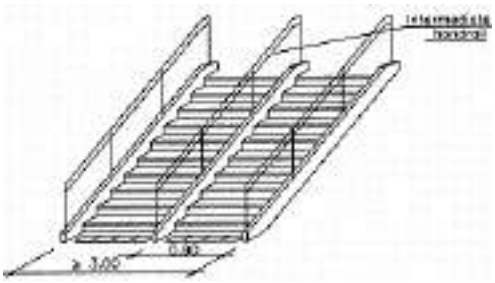


Figure 28

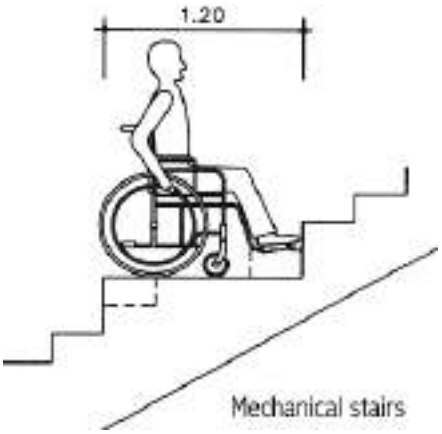


Figure 29

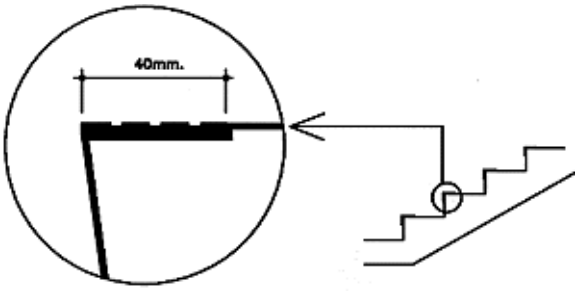


Figure 30

Safety Policy and Exits

Emergency and Evacuation

Accessibility is not only about providing independent entry to and proper usage of the premises, but also about ensuring a safe exit for persons with disabilities during emergencies

Observations

- At present, there is no systematic evacuation plan at the Supreme Court.
- Supreme Court needs to draft and design a Safety Evacuation Plan.

Recommendations

The following are some important aspects of Evacuation Strategy with respect to Persons with Disabilities:

1. Installations

Fire alarm boxes, emergency call buttons, lit panels and Fire Extinguishers should be installed visibly, between heights of 800 mm to 1000 mm from the floor surface. They should be contrasted from the background wall and labelled with raised letters and also in Braille. This will ensure accessibility for wheelchair users and people with visual impairment.

2. Alarm System

- Audible Alarms need to be sounded off to alert persons. Alarms with voice instructions may also be used to guide persons to nearest emergency exits and refuge areas or the central assembly point. This is especially useful for Persons with Visual Impairment.
- Visual and/or Vibrating Alarms need to be installed at select visible points to guide persons with hearing impairment. These can be in the form of flashing strobe lights and vibrators installed in suitable places – guest rooms, wash-rooms, library, computer, canteen, cafeterias, corridors and the lobby. Alarms can also be sent to the hearing-impaired person in the form of messages on their mobile phones to alert them in case of an emergency.

3. Evacuation Plan

A systematic evacuation plan needs to be drafted with building wise emergency exits and refuge areas. It should also identify central assembly point where people must assemble for evacuation.

a. **Emergency Evacuation Routes** should be about 1200 mm wide to enable easy movement for wheelchair users along with other persons. The route should preferably be free of steps, sudden changes in levels and be kept free of obstacles such as chairs or other objects.

b. **Clear Illuminated direction signage** should be installed (preferably at a height of 500 mm from the floor level), all along the evacuation route, right up to the exit point. Signs should be clear and large enough (at least 150 mm in height and arrows to be minimum 35 mm in height) to be visible from a distance of at least 1m.

A way guidance lighting system consisting of low mounted LED strips and



Figure 31: Emergency Signage

guiding strips to outline the exit route (on both sides of the corridor and stairs), should be installed along the entire length of the evacuation route.

This helps persons with visual impairment to walk faster and more easily than with the overhead guiding system.

c. **Refuge Area** should be provided for every building. People can assemble in these refuge areas marked with appropriate signage from where evacuation for Persons with Disabilities, the elderly and children would be easy. They can also be equipped with assistive evacuation equipment such as “evacuation chairs” for evacuating persons on wheelchair.

d. **Emergency Assembly Point** – A central area should be designated as the Emergency Gathering Point from where complete evacuation of the premises can be easily accomplished. This point needs to be indicated with the appropriate signage.

   The path leading to this point needs to be accessible – ensure minimum or no steps, obstruction free, smooth path to facilitate movement for wheelchair users. Tactile markings need to be present to guide persons with vision impairment.

   Everyone must try to evacuate to the nearest, safe exit or to a designated area of refuge. At least two emergency passageways in each building need to be identified which lead to either the exit or refuge area.

e. **Frequent Reviews** – Evacuation Plan, fire alarms and safety gadgets and equipment must be regularly checked and updated.

   Evacuation Assistants – It is recommended that each person with disability be assigned a network of (since the single person assigned may be absent on that particular day) co-workers, friends to provide assistance if an emergency develops. These "evacuation assistants" should be informed about what disabilities the candidates have and how he or she can best help them. He can assist the person right up to the emergency evacuation point or assist them to the refuge area and then alert personnel to come and assist them for evacuation

f. **Fire Drills** – Frequently Planned and Surprise fire drills should be organized to ensure evacuation can be done in a timely and regularized manner in case of any emergency.

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ACCESSIBILITY AUDIT OF SUPREME COURT PREMISES

by

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The audit has been conducted at the request of Hon'ble Justice S. Ravindra Bhat, Chairman of the Accessibility Committee, Supreme Court of India, essentially from the perspective of women (including pregnant women) and visually impaired (including elderly) persons, though certain observations have also made from the viewpoint of persons in wheelchairs and hearing impaired persons.

The first survey of the premises was undertaken on Friday, August 18, 2023 and the second on Monday, August 21, 2023, as the Supreme Court is generally most crowded on these days. The following portions of the Main Building Premises and the New Building Premises were assessed.

MAIN BUILDING PREMISES

- Entry from Gate D towards Chamber No. 40 (R.K. Garg Block);
- Pass Counter;
- Access Path from the Security Checkpoint (near the Pass Counter) towards the Lift to go the Main Corridor on the First Floor (near SCBA Library 1);
- Ladies Washroom next to the Lift on the First Floor;
- Libraries – SCBA Library 1 (including cubicles), E-Library next to the Consultation Room, Judges Library;
- Court Room Nos. 1, 2, 8, 11 and 12;
- Registrar Courts 1 and 2;
- Ladies Bar Room;
- Consultation Room;
- Cafeteria on the First Floor and the Plaza Canteen on the Ground Floor;
- SCBA Office;
- New Bar Room on the Ground Floor;

- New Differently Abled/Gender Neutral Washroom on the Ground Floor below Court Room No. 5;
- CGHS Medical Room;
- Mentioning Counter.

NEW BUILDING PREMISES

- Section 1B;
- Mediation Centre;
- New Chambers in Block D.

The aforesaid areas were selected as a sample to identify various barriers to access and to give recommendations for their removal.

We had the opportunity to meet and discuss some of our preliminary findings with Shri Sunil Chauhan, Additional Registrar, Supreme Court of India and Secretary of the Accessibility Committee, who later kindly shared with us a draft of the Report of the Accessibility Committee and Physical Accessibility Audit Report.

We have sought to supplement the said Reports and have organized our observations and recommendations under broad heads, giving a few illustrations where relevant. Although grouped under Main Building Premises and New Buildings Premises, some of the observations/recommendations would be of general application across all premises and buildings of the Supreme Court.

MAIN BUILDING PREMISES

Navigational Aids (apart from accessible route maps and appropriate signages)

- Dynamic QR Codes (i.e. two-dimensional barcodes), which can be scanned using an app on a smartphone, should be placed strategically in various locations. When the smartphone comes in the vicinity of a QR Code, the app sends out a verbal message identifying the location and giving other details and thus helps navigate within unfamiliar surroundings. QR Codes are reportedly being used by Delhi

University colleges, such as Miranda House and Kirori Mal College, to make navigation easier for their visually impaired students.[1]

- Proper training and orientation should be provided to persons with visual impairment to efficiently use the tactile flooring/markings/warning strips present within the Court premises.
- Entry Gates of the Supreme Court premises should have pre-recorded announcements which specify the Gate Number and its location details.
- At the security checkpoints, a pre-recorded instruction asking the individual to enter and exit should be given through a loudspeaker.
- Trained court staff should be deployed to help persons with disabilities (PwDs) navigate the Court premises and offer other support.

Pass Counter - Even though there is a separate window for PwDs, it is not really accessible for visually impaired persons without an escort; the counter is too high for a person in a wheelchair; windows at the counter have sharp edges. It is especially important to have trained and sensitized staff at the Pass Counter since this is generally the first point of contact for visitors.

Access Paths/Pathways/Corridors – should be smooth, level and continuous and should be clear and free of obstructions, such as wires running across pathways; gap with jutting out iron in the floor between iron gates in a few corridors (eg., between the Lift and the Ladies Washroom on the First Floor); bags and other equipment lying in corridors (eg. outside Court Rooms); flower pots on both sides of corridor (eg. Judges Corridor); and thick mats at entrances (eg. Pass Counter, New Bar Room on the Ground Floor, Judges Library).

[1] *See* Ibrar, Mohammad, '*QR codes for visually impaired at Kirori Mal College'*, The Times of India, June 10, 2019; Blindness Blog, '*How Miranda House, DU Is Using Technology to Make Navigation for Its Blind Students Easier',* Eyeway, July 22, 2017.

Court Rooms – Access is constrained by heavy curtains and slope/steps at the entrance; lighting in the Court Room is uneven; the partition for visitors' enclosure should only be a straight partition without the sides which obstruct access and have sharp edges; judges are at times not audible if they do not speak into the microphones; sign language interpreter should be provided for hearing impaired persons.

Libraries – The Cubicles in SCBA Library 1 and the seating in SCBA Library 2 are too narrow and congested for wheelchair bound persons; a person with visual impairment may not be able to make use of the E-Library next to the Consultation Room as the audio file using text to speech engine would disturb others using the E-Library.

Therefore, a separate resource room equipped with computers with requisite software should be arranged for PwDs, together with at least one trained staff to provide necessary assistance.

Ladies Bar Room – There is a slope at the entrance of the room; the flooring is uneven; the washrooms are not accessible for wheelchair bound persons.

Cafeteria on the First Floor – The Cafeteria is very congested; there is no access for a person in a wheelchair and it does not have a QR Code Menu.

Plaza Canteen on the Ground Floor - The Plaza Canteen is very congested and has poor lighting; there is a step at the entrance making access difficult for a person in a wheelchair and it does not have a QR Code Menu.

Washrooms – There are a few accessible washrooms, for instance, the Ladies Washroom next to the Lift on the First Floor and the New Differently Abled/Gender Neutral Washroom on the Ground Floor. More such washrooms (gender specific and gender neutral) are needed - in the CGHS Medical Room, Chamber Corridors etc. In the interim, assistance should be made available to PwDs to access the existing washrooms.

The aforesaid accessible washrooms have certain issues: sharp edges of counters/slabs/iron bracket underneath slab, and obstruction by sewage manholes in front of the bathroom cubicles of the Ground Floor washroom constrain

access/expose PwDs to risk of injury. In general, washrooms lack proper ventilation, adequate covered dustbins, Sanitary Towel dispensers and toilet paper. All these can be addressed in the short term by adopting suitable measures.

Mentioning Counter – We were informed that this is a temporary counter made for mentioning urgent matters till a proper room with adequate waiting area is not identified. In the present Porta Cabin, access is narrow and constrained by uneven threshold at entrance/flooring, the counter is too high for a wheelchair bound person; counter windows are too small; passage leading to the counters is narrow with a row of steel chairs on one side.

NEW BUILDING PREMISES

Section 1B - While broadly accessible for PwDs, certain issues persist such as thick wires running across the room and counter being too high for a person on a wheelchair. There is no special app for online filing of cases or miscellaneous applications. For the purpose of physical filing of cases, curing defects and verification, there should be a separate help desk for PwDs.

Mediation Centre – Again, while broadly accessible for PwDs, it should be ensured that all the mediation rooms have proper lighting and ventilation and sufficient space to manoeuvre and that obstructive furniture (such as iron filing cabinets) and unsuitable furniture (such as low table with sharp edges) are removed.

Global/General Observations

- Provision should be made for sufficient and even lighting in Corridors, Court Rooms etc.; non-slippery ramps with proper gradient and grab bars; wheelchairs at the requisite locations; and adequate and accessible drinking water units; a separate room for nursing mothers.
- The threshold at entrances should be levelled; lifts should be wide enough for wheelchair access and should announce the floor clearly and loudly; doors at the main entrances and exits should over time be replaced by automatic doors.
- Seating areas and arrangement of furniture should be suitable for PwDs; furniture/slabs/handrails should not have jagged or sharp edges.

- Programmes should be regularly conducted to sensitize all stakeholders of the Court system to the needs of PwDs.
- Fire Safety Audit should be conducted.
- Appropriate parking spaces should be allotted for PwDs.
- Accessibility test of the website of the Supreme Court of India should be conducted from the perspective of visually impaired persons (for instance, to ensure that all CAPTCHAS are also in audio form which is loud and clear and that uploading of files is properly accessible).
- All relevant information for PwDs (including with regard to evacuation/emergency plan and the GSICC) should be uploaded on the Supreme Court website and regularly updated.

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FUNCTIONAL ACCESSIBILITY REPORT OF SUPREME COURT OF INDIA' INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT) INFRASTRUCTURE

H.S. Jaggi[1]

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[1] Registrar, Technology. The author of this report is a differently abled person, who also happens to be the first differently abled Judge in the Delhi Higher Judicial Services (DHJS).

"The path to inclusion starts with accessibility."

Introduction

1. This report is prepared with an objective to ascertain the information and communications technology (ICT) landscape of the Supreme Court of India from the accessibility perspective. In this report, an endeavour has been made to identify the gaps, and advance few suggestions, which when given effect to, will be helpful in strengthening the institutional goals of the Supreme Court of India and making the Apex Court accessible to all.

2. Under the aegis of Supreme Court, the Indian judiciary is leading in adoption and use of technology and consequentially strengthening the right to access to justice and right of administration of justice.

3. The court hearings through video conferencing and predominant use of electronic filing are the silver lining to the outbreak of pandemic Coronavirus (COVID-19). The Supreme Court of India livestreams the court proceedings of Constitution Bench matters on its official website and through YouTube for wider reach. The electronic filing of fresh cases, appeals, documents etc. are routine and default mode for courts in India. Further, lately Supreme Court tested deployment of artificial intelligence enabled tools for transcription of arguments in Constitution Bench matters.

4. On January 02, 2023, Supreme Court India launched electronic journal of its reported judgments – eSCR[2] through which any person may access over 35,000 judgments of Supreme Court since 1950 free of cost. The Supreme Court has also started the process of translating its judgment from English language to popular vernacular languages. By such initiatives not only the Supreme Court intends to empower the young lawyers but also the citizens of country, who may access the judgments in the quickest and easiest manner.

[2] https://judgments.ecourts.gov.in/pdfsearch/?p=pdf_search/index&escr_flag=Y

5. The convening of court proceedings through video conferencing (VC), transcribing of oral arguments using artificial intelligence, electronic filing of cases, dissemination of information about cases, listing of cases and administration of justice through website and mobile applications are mainstay ICT tools. The Indian judiciary believes in transparency and accountability and keeping aligned with these values, data of all District Courts and High Courts can be accessed through the one and only of its kind, National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG).[3] The Registry of Supreme Court of India is in very advanced stage of onboarding NJDG.

Functional Accessibility of ICT Tools & Services

6. Amidst the development of ICT tools and services, a couple of questions, which are the guiding star, must be answered. Firstly, whether we have onboarded all fellow citizens, stakeholders in the realm of technology? Secondly, whether we have ensured to build a strong and robust ICT infrastructure which is accessible?

7. The most common disabilities, impairments amongst mankind across the globe are visual, hearing, motor, cognitive. A person suffering from blindness, low vision may need alternative text descriptions for meaningful images and use the keyboard and not a mouse to interact with interactive elements. Similarly, a person who is deaf or hard of hearing will need captioning for video presentations and visual indicators in place of audio cues. A person with motor impairments may need alternative keyboards, eye control or some other adaptive hardware to help them type and navigate on their devices while accessing ICT tool and services. Lastly, a person suffering from cognitive disability would need an uncluttered screen, consistent navigation and use of plain language.

8. Under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (RPD Act), "information and communication technology" has been defined as all services and innovations relating to information and communication, including telecom services, web based services, electronic and print services, digital and virtual services.[4]

[3] https://njdg.ecourts.gov.in/njdgnew/index.php
[4] See Section 2(n) of the RPD Act, 2016

9. The United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy is on the bedrock of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). CRPD is an international human rights treaty of the United Nations intended to protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. It was adopted on December 13, 2006 and describes human rights frameworks linked to accessibility, aspects of universal design, reasonable accommodation and international standards for accessibility. UNICEF's existing commitments and policies to promote accessibility are aligned with the CRPD.

10. The accessibility of spaces and places determines the extent to which everyone – including persons with disabilities, older persons and children – can live, work and learn independently and participate fully and equally in society. Equal access to transportation, media, information and communication technologies, and public services and facilities, such as schools, libraries and town halls, facilitates the participation of persons with disabilities, in both urban and rural communities. Accessibility is also critical in emergency contexts, such as refugee camps, to ensure access to humanitarian services and facilities.[5]

11. Taking leaf from the term 'universal design' coined by the American architect Ron Mace, which means good design that benefits everyone. In Article 2, CRPD defines universal design as the design of products, environments, programmes and service to be usable by all people, to the greatest possible extent, without needing adaptation or specialized design.

12. Section 2 (ze) of the RPD Act, defines "universal design" as the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design and shall apply to assistive devices including advanced technologies for particular group of persons with disabilities.

[5] Excerpt From -- TOOLKIT ON ACCESSIBILITY SECTION F: ORGANIZATION OF ACCESSIBLE EVENTS UNICEF
https://itunes.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewBook?id=0

13. The concept of universal design applies to all areas of life can be summarized as under:

(i) Equitable use
(ii) Flexibility in use
(iii) Simple and intuitive use
(iv) Perceivable information
(v) Error tolerance
(vi) Lowe physical effort

14. Technology and its use by humans is ubiquitous to their existence. Therefore, it is imperative to stretch and apply the universal design principle on Supreme Court of India' entire information communication and technology infrastructure which shall be inclusive of hardware, software, work processes, procurement, etc.

15. The ICT infrastructure of the Supreme Court of India on a wider spectrum can be divided under public use and private use. The public use can be understood as those IT services, which are accessed by the public through internet connectivity and the private use can be safely understood as those IT services, computer applications, software, which are used by the Registry of Supreme Court of India for discharge of daily functions and accessible through intranet connectivity.

16. The public IT services provided by the Supreme Court of India are as under:

(i) Website
(ii) Mobile App
(iii) Electronic filing
(iv) Digitized paper-books
(v) eCopying for certified copy
(vi) eSCR – electronic Supreme Court Reports
(vii) Advocates Appearance Portal
(viii) Online RTI portal
(ix) Entry/Exit pass software
(x) Video Conferencing for hybrid hearings, work meetings and public functions

(xi) Live streaming of Constitution Bench cases and public functions

(xii) Automated email and short text message (SMS) services

17. The private IT services availed and used by the Supreme Court of India for its employees and stakeholders are as under:

(i) Case management software i.e., Integrated Case Management Information System

(ii) Attendance software

(iii) Email services provided by National Informatics Centre

(iv) Automated email and SMS services

(v) Computer applications and software, such as office suite comprising of word processor, spreadsheet, presentation, etc.

(vi) Library reference resources

(vii) IT hardware – computer desktops, laptops, printers, scanners, etc.

(viii) VOIP telephony

Digital Accessibility Basics

18. Before, I proceed further, I deem appropriate to discuss the basics of digital accessibility. Any digital content generated and shared either internally or externally by the Registry of Supreme Court of India must be accessible. It shall be the continuous endeavour of the officers, officials of the Registry to ensure that the documents created and shared are accessible, virtual presentation tools are accessible, website content is accessible, creation of accessible data visualisations on the web, writing accessible emails, adhering to video accessibility principles and usage of closed caption, transcription.

19. Visual tools are often used while imparting training, making proposals, presentations. It is has been observed that basic video accessible principles such as ensuring no flickering content, inclusion of only accessible content, use of an accessible video player, avoidance of auto-play feature, providing captions, video descriptions and transcript go long way to display the mindfulness, adherence to accessibility and inclusivity.

Website of Supreme Court of India

20. Communication[6] includes means and formats of communication, language, display of text, Braille, tactile-communication, signs, large print, accessible multimedia, written, audio, video, visual displays, sign language, plain-language, human-reader, augmentative and alternative modes and accessible information and communication technology.

21. Supreme Court of India disseminates all information about its judicial and administration work through its website – www.sci.gov.in which is hosted on NIC cloud. All notices, circulates, latest updates, case related information such as list of business (cause list), judgments, daily orders, information about the Hon'ble Judges, Registry' officers and officials is published on the website.

22. For the purpose of this report, a basic evaluation of the landing page of the website of Supreme Court of India[7] was undertaken using WAVE web accessibility evaluation tool (WAVE).[8] WAVE is a suite of evaluation tools that helps authors make their web content more accessible to individuals with disabilities. WAVE can identify accessibility and web content accessibility guideline errors.

23. The WAVE report of the landing page of the Supreme Court of India' website points out the following shortcomings:

(i) 37 Errors - 33 errors are about missing alternative text, 03 empty buttons and 01 error for the marquee

(ii) 33 Contrast Errors – the accessible tool of WAVE identified that there are 33 very low contrast

(iii) 2472 Alerts – nearby image has same alternative text, no page region, redundant links, links to PDF document, Word document, Excel spreadsheet

(iv) 17 very small text

(v) 04 redundant title text

(vi) 01 layout table issue

[6] See Section 2(f), RPD Act, 2016
[7] URL - https://main.sci.gov.in/
[8] https://wave.webaim.org

The following screenshots revealing the above-stated errors on the landing page of the Supreme Court of India –

SCREENSHOT 1



SCREENSHOT 2



24. Missing alternative text means that image alternative text is not present. The missing alternative text is a key attribute from the accessible viewpoint as each image must have an alternative attribute. Without alternative text, the content of an image will not be available to screen reader users or when the image is unavailable.

25. A button is very important from the accessibility perspective. An empty button on the webpage or a button with no value text makes navigation cumbersome, as descriptive text for a button would enable a screen reader to indicate the function of the button.

26. Contrast feature is key for users with low vision or colour blindness, therefore low contrast between text and background colours make the website of Supreme Court of India not accessible. Usage of layout table cause reading and navigation order issues. The screen readers may interpret the layout table as data table i.e., announcing column and row numbers and the same would cause overhead on screen reader users.

27. The webpage of case status, judgments, daily orders is found with missing form label, empty button, empty table header, very low contrast errors, missing label. The CAPTCHA and DIARY number were also found with missing form labels.

28. The landing webpage of the Supreme Court of India uses marquee for important judgments, updates and listing notices. A marquee element presents scrolling text that the user cannot stop. Scrolling animated text causes distraction and confusion to users, with certain cognitive disabilities.

29. The Supreme Court of India generates and deals with electronic record in all of its work processes and functions. It is observed that the all judgments, orders, record of proceedings, notices, updates, etc. are in portable document format (PDF). It is also observed that there are not alternative formats which are more accessible than PDF used by the Registry. Supreme Court of India must use and publish information, daily orders, judgments, etc., in at least following formats:

(i) HTML

(ii) Rich text format (RTF) or plaint text

(iii) PDF

(iv) ePUB

(v) Audio books

Use of accessible material with pictures, diagrams, without too much text is also recommended.

30. Foremost of all, the website must highlight the accessibility features available at the Supreme Court of India. All relevant information such as nearest accessible public mode of transport, accessible parking or drop-off area, accessible reception desk, policy for entry/exit of a care provider accompanying the differently abled person, accessible tactile path, accessible toilets and their location, all public places which are accessible such as courtrooms, library, canteen, information points.

eFiling Portal

31. The new electronic filing portal[9] (efiling) launched by the Supreme Court of India on May 12, 2023 was also tested using the WAVE tool. It has been observed that there are 03 key errors comprising of missing alternative text, missing form label and an empty button. Further there are 11 contrast errors and 05 alerts for no heading structure, possible heading and device dependant event handler. A screenshot revealing the above-stated errors on the landing page of eFiling portal –

SCREENSHOT 3



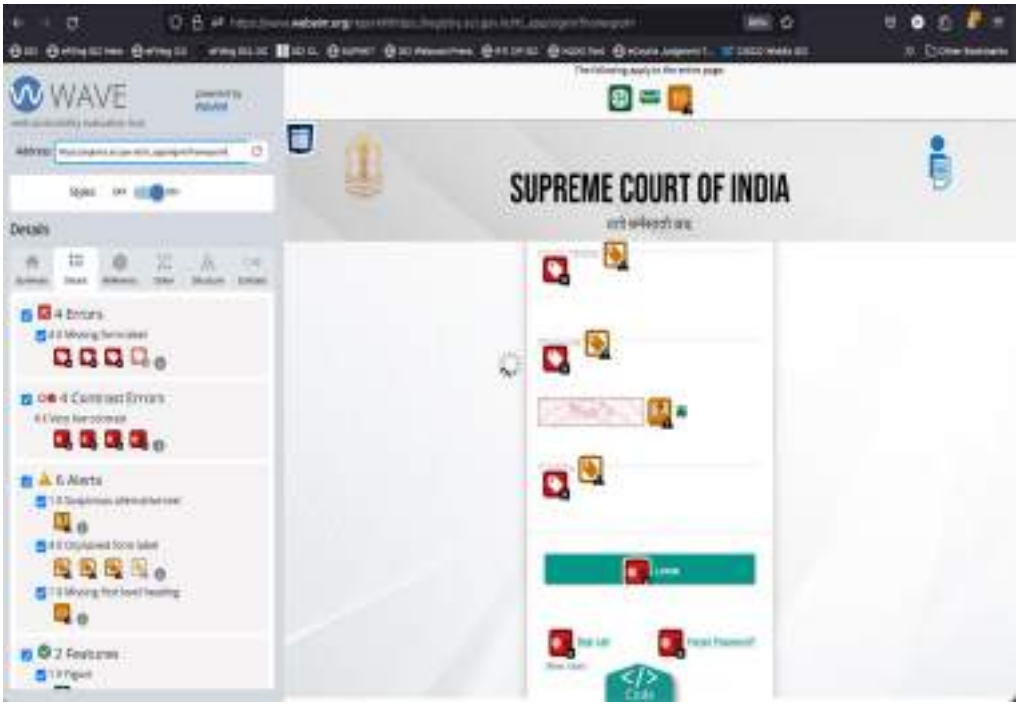
[9] www.efiling.sci.gov.in

Appendix C

Online RTI Portal

32. The online RTI portal of Supreme Court of India has been found with the shortcomings such as missing form label, contrast errors, suspicious alternative text, orphaned form label, missing first level heading. A screenshot revealing the above-stated errors on the landing page of eFiling portal –

SCREENSHOT 4



Online Advocates Appearance Portal

33. Online Advocates Appearance Portal launched on January 02, 2023 also has missing form label, contrast errors, no hearing structure.

eSCR

34. The electronic Supreme Court Reports (eSCR) is also found with errors of missing alternative text, empty button, broken ARIA reference.

35. On careful consideration of the errors and missing links of the above mentioned software, applications developed and used by the Registry of the Supreme Court of India, it is not out of place to state that the Registry must make it mandatory

to ensure that all computer application, software clear the standard accessibility tests and adopt industry standards and best practices. Further, the Registry must resort to period inspections, tests and certification of its ICT infrastructure so that all IT services are free of any barriers and accessible to all users.

Video Conferencing, Livestreaming and Public Functions

36. Accessibility related technology must be used for video conferencing, livestreaming of court proceedings, public functions such as live filming, live translations, live transcriptions communication access real-time translation (CART), sign language interpretations, magnetic hearing loops, etc.

37. A unique challenge would always remain before the Supreme Court of India, which is that adoption of accessible measure at a large public conference is feasible, however, in a courtroom, there are often multiple speakers, which would be a herculean task for sign language interpreters.

38. However, provisioning of screens in the courtrooms showing the Bench and the sign language interpreters must be adopted. To make livestreaming of court proceedings and public functions through video conferencing, the Registry may become more accessible by ensuring the availability in different formats – accessible website, use of subtitles. Similarly, the transcripts of Constitution Bench cases must also be published on the website in all popular accessible formats along with audio books.

VOIP

39. Even though, the voice over internet protocol (VOIP) installed at the Supreme Court of India is of latest technology and world renowned original equipment manufacturer (OEM), namely, CISCO, however, the VOIP phones installed are inaccessible to individuals with blindness or persons with low vision or person with disability and/or high support needs.

40. The VOIP phones installed by the Registry at least for the use of its disabled employees must have discernible physical keys, accessible caller ID, accessible voicemail indicator, accessible call log, accessible address book, accessible softkeys,

large font and high contrast display screen, accessible documentation, accessible indication of status changes, accessible alternative for display information.[10]

Contingency Plan

41. As it is for the first time an extensive accessibility audit of the Supreme Court of India on all counts is being undertaken by the Committee. I urge to draw attention of the Hon'ble Member of the Committee, to an area of concern, which till date has remained neglected on the part of the Registry.

42. God forbid! In case any Hon'ble Judge during the term of office, or an employee of the Supreme Court of India while in the harness suffers 'disability', the infrastructure of Supreme Court of India, particularly, the ICT infrastructure shall be found wanting. With all humility at my command, I wish to draw attention of the Committee, to direct all concerned officers and officials of the Registry to bring in a detailed and robust contingency plan, to deal with such an occasion, where anyone of us becomes disabled on account of mishap, accident, health grounds or any other ground. It will be great disservice if we don't bring in a contingency plan to deal with disabled persons and make Supreme Court of India accessible to all in letter and spirit.

Suggestions

43. Accessibility removes barriers and unlocks the possible.[11] Every user who visits the website of the Supreme Court of India or avails any services provided through ICT tools by the Supreme Court deserves a digital experience which is accessible and inclusive. There shall not be any discrimination in experience of users availing web-based services, accessing content on the ground of disability. The most common causes of accessibility failures as narrated above in Supreme Court of India' ICT infrastructure are low contrast text, missing image alt text, empty links, missing form input labels, empty buttons, missing document language, limited digital formats to access all information i.e., PDF

[10] https://www.ntac.blind.msstate.edu/consumers/resources/top-10-features-accessible-voip-phone
[11] https://accessibility.day

44. Accordingly, I deem fit to grab this opportunity with both hands, to advance a few suggestions for kind consideration and approval of the Committee, which may ensure that Supreme Court of India is digitally accessible to all in every sense. The suggestions advanced are as under:

(a) Development of toolkit on digital accessibility, which should not be limited to web content, but include all IT services provided and availed by the Supreme Court of India.

(b) The Registry, Supreme Court of India takes all necessary steps to strictly comply with the mandate of Section 12(4) read with Section 42 of the RPD Act, 2016.

(c) Procurement and deployment of IT hardware which is accessible. Provisioning of kiosks with assistive features at the entry/exit points, key focal points around courtrooms, library, etc. with goal to strengthen the information and communication technology and remove barriers at Supreme Court of India.

(d) Sensitivity program for not only software development team, Information Technology department, but also other key branches of the Registry, such as Admn. Judges, Courts & Buildings, Procurement and Stores, on how to develop, deploy and maintain functional accessibility in realm of ICT infrastructure.

(e) Training session for differently abled persons (read as stakeholders) by seeking participation by invitation, to know and understand the needs of each person in advance, group activities, discussions, exercises, use of materials – presentation, video, etc.

(f) Adequate training and sensitization of staff and all stakeholders, on how to interact and address people with different impairments. All employees should have a good sense of disability inclusion basis and how to create accessible documents, emails and other digital content.

(g) ICT procurement policy be brought in place for differently abled employees, Advocates and other stakeholders.

(h) ICT infrastructure inclusive of but not limited to web platforms, mobile apps, web services, computer applications, documents/files in electronic or easy-read format, software audio visual content must be accessible and have content with captions and transcriptions.

(i) All communication, public functions by the Registry must be inclusive, have sign language interpretation, easy to read publications, accessible posters. Public notice for events, functions must always state the list of accessibility information for the venue and services provided, to ensure maximum participation of differently abled persons.

(j) Initiate capacity building programmes for training and professional development of the programmers, software development team, officers of the Computer Cell to upgrade their skill-set and knowledge pool. The Training Cell of the Registry must ensure that adequate number of officers and officials attend special courses, conferences at premier government institutions and multinational corporations with the objective to stay abreast with latest advancement, assistive technology for developing and deploying fully accessible computer programs, software and applications.

(k) Periodic assessment and testing of all ICT infrastructure, inclusive but not limited to, website, mobile app, efiling, eSCR, entry/exit software, attendance software, case management software, email services, advocates online appearance portal, online RTI portal, SCI Interact, library reference material (digital format), etc., preferably on annual basis, to ensure that Supreme Court of India is functionally accessible to all and in case there are any gaps, the same be filled immediately. Such an exercise shall enable us to identify the common pitfalls and bring in place appropriate plans and remedial measures.

(l) The Registry must bring in robust policy as contingency plan to deal with situations as stated in paragraph numbers 41 and 42 of this report.

(m) The Registry must also bring in a robust policy in place to have periodical consultations with persons with disabilities, collaboration with accessibility specialists around the world so that all advancements made in the ICT sphere are adopted with the objective of ensuring that Supreme Court of India is disability-inclusive and accessible to all.

Conclusion

45. I express deep gratitude to Hon'ble Mr. Justice S. Ravindra Bhat for giving me an opportunity to pen this report and submit for His Lordship' kind consideration and approval.

Hargurvarinder Singh Jaggi
Registrar (Technology)

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ACCESSIBILITY & INCLUSIVITY FOR WOMEN, CHILDREN & SENIOR CITIZEN

AT

SUPREME COURT PREMISES

Random Visits & Suggestions

Submitted by

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eCommittee, Supreme Court of India

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Introduction:

In continuation of the discussions at the accessibility meeting held under the Chairmanship of Hon'ble Justice S. Ravindra Bhat, Chairman of the Accessibility Committee, Supreme Court of India, as directed a random study of the accessibility requirements of Women, Children, and senior citizens was made and the following reflections are submitted for the kind perusal and consideration of the Accessibility committee.

Methodology of Study:

(I) Physical Visits.

(II) Collecting inputs through informal discussions with random stakeholders (Women court staff/ Advocate/etc.).

The study was soul-satisfying and before I ventured to give the findings, I put forth the first major suggestion which came up during the study.

1. Creating an Accessibility and Inclusion section at the Registry of the Supreme Court of India:

1.1 Challenge:

There is the absence of a specific section in the registry that can deal with the ever-growing Inclusivity and diversity needs. Hence to institutionalize the accessibility reforms the following are suggested.

1.2 Action points:

Creating Accessibility and Inclusion section at the Supreme Court of India:

- To address the Accessibility, inclusivity, and diversity needs of Stakeholders of the Supreme Court of India.
- To be a single point of contact for persons with disabilities Stakeholders of the Supreme Court of India.
- These disabilities include visual/hearing impairment, locomotor disabilities, intellectual disabilities, and other disabilities.

- The vision and motto of the Accessibility and Inclusivity section of the Supreme Court of India is to provide the stakeholders with disabilities a physically and digitally accessible environment in connection with the Supreme Court of India where they can participate and perform to their full potential.

- The Accessibility and Inclusivity section can be entrusted with the role of receiving and complying with the accessibility request.

- The accessibility, Diversity, and Inclusion Help desk at e-Sewa Kendra.
- Online Diversity and Inclusion Help Desk embedded with SuSwagatam e-pass software.

2. Digital Platform & Application Accessibility Audit & Accessibility Certification:

- All the ICT products to be done digital accessibility audit.
- FAQ with the inclusive features to be made available at the e-Pass website of the Supreme Court of India.

- Digital accessibility features as per the guideline of W3GA which need to be ensured the widget switches on, Keyboard navigation, Screen reader, Text magnification, Special dyslexia font, Dark and light modes, Invert colors, and Color desaturation. Also, it can show the page structure, highlight links, and pause animations.

- Digital Platform & Application accessibility audit & certification: To have an accessibility audit of the websites and the application and to get the STQC certification based on GIGW guidelines and W3GA content.

3. Visit To Random Women's Washrooms:

As directed, I have visited the women's washroom at random:



It was heartening to see the sanitary napkin dispenser made available in the women's washroom, when I talked with the women present there everybody appreciated the women's napkin dispenser. I also tried my hand by using a five rupees coin and the napkin dispenser was working seamlessly.



3.1 Challenge:

- The issue of incinerator-used sanitary napkin dispenser unit in the washroom common area was raised so that it was not comfortable to have it in the common area and it should be in a closed place.

- The drinking water is also placed near the toilet of men and women and the stakeholders who were interviewed highlighted that drinking water may be placed away from the washrooms as it is unhygienic and also not comfortable to use it nearer to the washrooms.

3.2 Suggestions:

The used napkin dispenser may be kept inside a room with a door so that it will be private for the women to dispose of the Napkins as everybody unanimously highlighted that they will shy away from using the dispenser in the common open place.

4. Changing Rooms For Women:

The women who were randomly interviewed also suggested the need for a changing room for women.

5. Easy Access Through Women Help Desk:

e-Pass making can be made easier for women and disabled: for wheelchair users, the pass can be made with the caretaker.

6. Inaccessible CGHS Medical Room for Senior Citizen/Wheelchair Users:

- During the physical visit, it was found a part of the CGHS which houses the Ortho, and physiotherapy eye is situated downstairs with steps making it inaccessible for senior citizens and wheelchair users.

- However, it was found that there was a small entry door in the back which is under lock and key and can be used in an emergency.

- Having the inclusive policy on hand it is suggested that it is better to have a universal design that makes it easily accessible for the senior citizen and wheelchair user on an equal footing as a normal person.

- Though already some departments have been moved to the New Additional building complex the existing CGHS inaccessible departments through wheelchairs can be made accessible by shifting and rearranging the rooms with a little concern on inclusivity and making Supreme Court standing examples of the universal design policy where all have equal access to the Supreme court building.

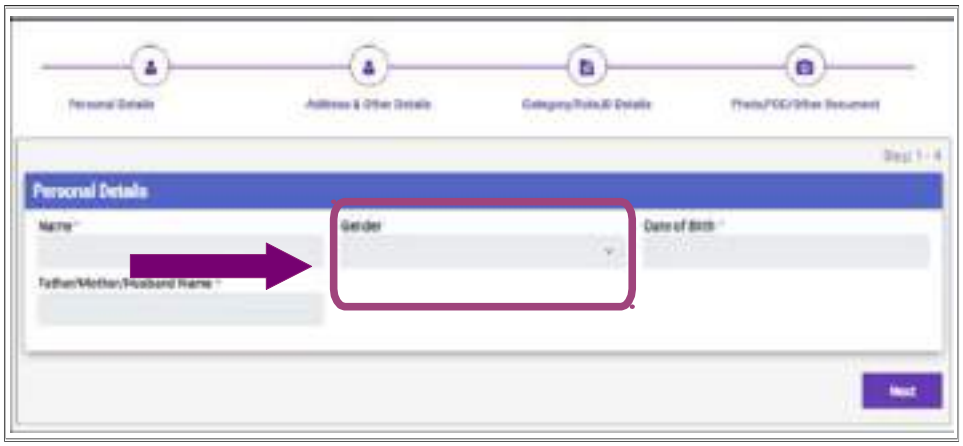
6.1 Action Points:

- Moving of the CGHS medical departments in the old building which is inaccessible by wheelchair and inaccessible for senior citizens to an accessible place with a rethinking of the universal design policy.
- Help desk for Women, Senior Citizens, Physically challenged at Supreme Court e-Sewa Kendra.

7. Digital Accessibility features: General Suggestion:

7.1 Making SuSwagatam -online e-pass software to be loaded with inclusive accessibility features for persons with special needs:

SuSwagatam is an initiative introduced by the Supreme Court of India to provide a seamless and straightforward process for obtaining, a paperless e-Pass required to visit the SCI for official or case-related purposes. The platform offers advanced features aimed at eliminating the cumbersome and tedious procedures involved in making visit requests.



7.2 Gender Feature with added inclusive/accessibility features:

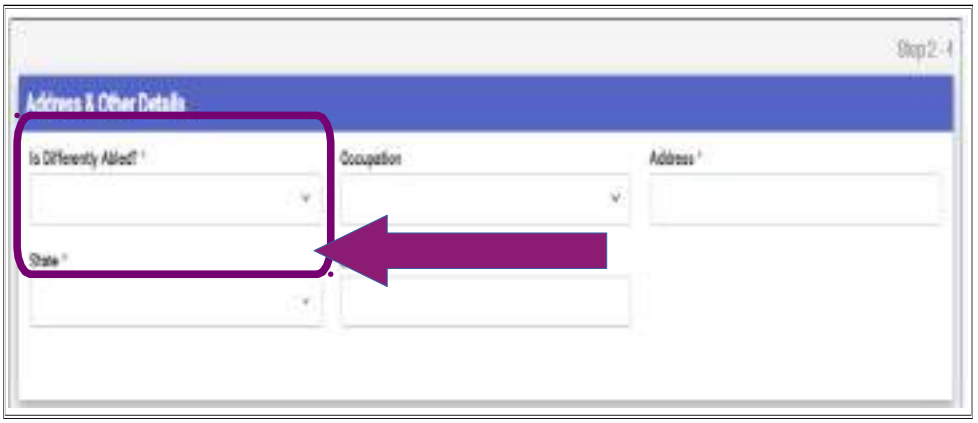
The software captures gender in the personal detail, once the gender is filled additional inclusive features options can be displayed in the software.

For example: if a woman is selected it should display the:

- Whether the creche option
- Whether they need the Lactation room
- Whether pregnant women need women waiting room need to be enabled

8. Inclusive/Accessibility Services to be Enabled for Differently Abled Tab:

Likewise, there is a box that captures whether the visitor is physically disabled



It can also further open up the following options of type of disability:

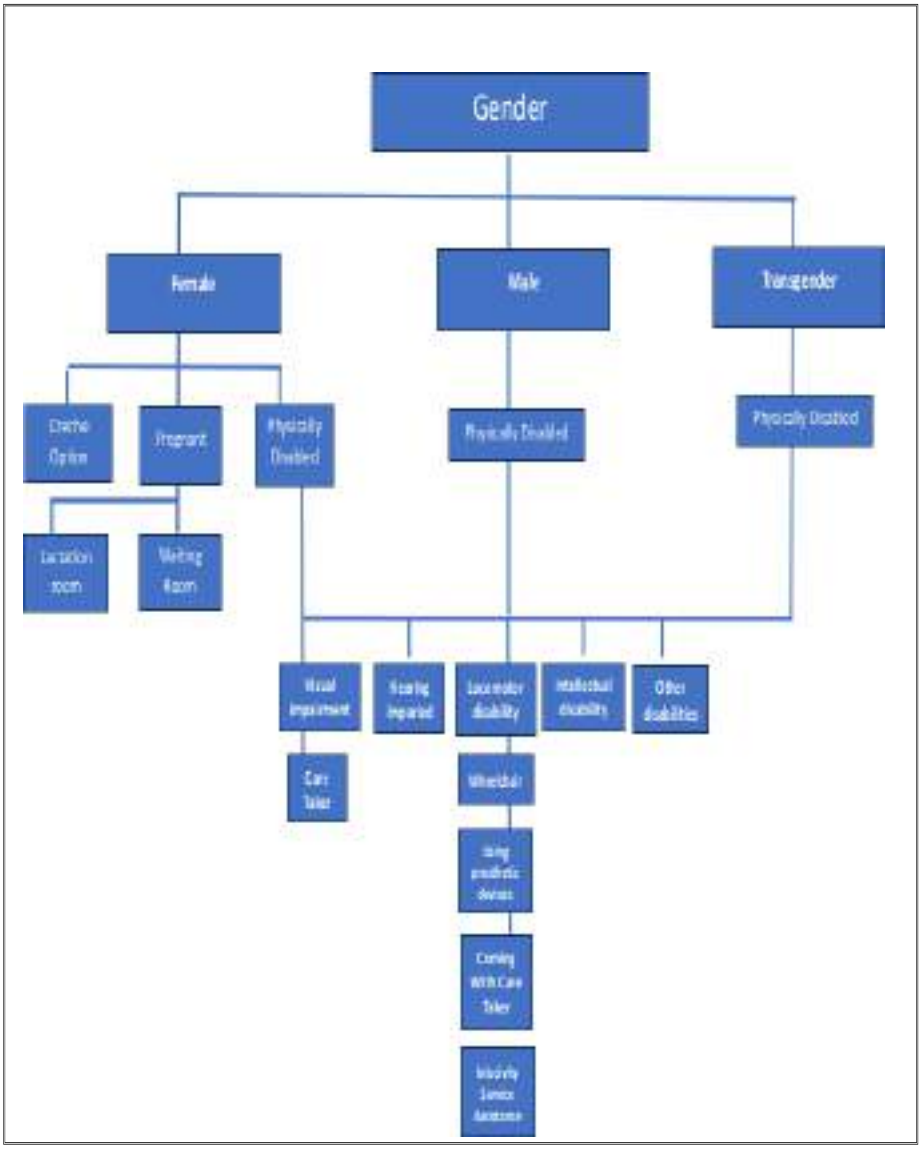
8.1 Main menu:

- Visual impairment
- Hearing impaired
- Locomotor disability
- Intellectual disability
- Other disabilities specify

8.2 Sub menus:

- Locomotor disability
- Wheelchair
- Using crutches, braces, and or other prosthetic devices specify
- Whether need Inclusivity service
- Coming with caretaker
- Need inclusivity service assistance

The features are only suggestive and not exhaustive



9. Digital and IT Framework: Website & Mobile App:

9.1 Challenges:

- Lack of accessibility features for physically disabled people especially those who have restricted hand movements/hand-related nervous issues in upper limb amputees.
- Lack of accessibility features to cover the intellectual disability people.
- The website and mobile App to cover all types of disabled people.

9.2 Suggestions:

- The website to be enabled with Keyboard and mouse options exclusively for the upper limb- based (restricted hand movements/hand-related nervous issues upper limb amputees) physically disabled people.
- Voice command enabled website/mobile features for persons with limb-related disability, visually impaired, and senior citizens.
- The pass software to be enabled with the feature to check and make online prior physical accessibility needs.
- The Disability and Inclusive section proposed to be in charge of handling the request and its compliance.

10. Creche Visit:

On 20.09.2023 at 9.30 am I took upon myself to visit the creche. I have heard that the creche is near the Supreme Court Museum and I took the task to go to creche with minimum help. The stakeholders present there were unanimously happy with the creche facility. I randomly talked with two mothers one of whom is a practicing advocate and she applauded that she has had two children the first child was in creche for 6 months and she has started going to school and now utilizing this creche for her second child also. She felt this creche was highly secure and she has 100 percent trust in this creche. The same was echoed by another mother who is from the registry and also said she had earlier availed the creche for her first child and now she is using it for her second child.

The creche was very well maintained with the CCTV camera clean and tidy with my random surprise visit. Activities were going on in full swing among children. Considering their privacy I avoided taking photos of the vibrant activity area filled with children and joy. A few of the features are captured herewith for the ready reference.



FIGURE 1: MAIN ENTRANCE OF CRICHE

FIGURE 2: OUTDOOR PLAYING FOR CHILDREN

FIGURE 3: LACTATION ROOM

FIGURE 4: CCTV COVERAGE OF CRECHE

FIGURE 5: ACTIVITY INDOOR PLAY AREA

FIGURE 6: SLEEPING AREA FOR CHILDREN

10.1 Challenges:

To create awareness and notify the stakeholders on the availability of the creche the women with infants and their family members should be able to find out the creche on their own.



10.2 Suggestions:

- The online SuSwagatam portal is to be enabled with the feature showing the creche option.

- The notification of availing creche may be enabled through SMS and email for the stakeholders coming with infants to the Supreme Court.
- A guided map to creche can also be added to the e-Pass software.
- To Have a Additional Creche at Additional Building complex

11. Functional Accessibility:

The following additional inputs are suggested in connection with the functional accessibility chapter on Page 12.

11.1 Challenges:

- The courtrooms are not easily accessible for the litigant and advocate who is a wheelchair user.
- The doorways of the courtrooms, and washrooms are mostly not wide enough to allow the different types of wheelchairs making them inaccessible.
- There is a lack of accessibility features in the lift, doors for persons with physical disability with restricted hand movements/hand-related nervous issues upper limb amputees.
- There is a lack of accessibility features inside the auditorium for the wheelchair user. In a recently conducted training programme there was women disabled staff in a wheelchair whom we couldn't accommodate in the audience and we placed her before the audience line which she felt uncomfortable.
- During the training when the wheelchair user court staff was called to give feedback, we couldn't accommodate her in the podium where others offered their feedback. Hence, the stage and the podium need to be customized for the wheelchair user resource persons/ stakeholders.

- The photo taken during the training is also appended herewith to throw clarity on the requirement of the wheelchair user.



11.2 Suggestions:

- The court halls and pathways should be enabled for the litigant/Advocate/court staff using wheelchair users to easily access the court halls.
- The auditorium can be provided with an earmarked space for wheelchair users and chairs can be customized to move in the said space to accommodate the wheelchair audience in every auditorium.
- The Stage and Podium of the auditorium should also be enabled with hydraulic lifts/ramps so that resource persons coming in wheelchairs can be accommodated.
- The resource person and audience who come to speak on the podium should also have a customized podium at their level to make it easy and comfortable for them.
- There should standby electric power wheelchair /manually propelled wheelchair available at the help desk counter.
- The request for the wheelchair should be enabled in the e-Pass software so that the person with a disability can make a request seamlessly.

- The doors and the pathways should adhere to international standards of physical accessibility with proper gradient ramps and doors wide enough to allow the wheelchair for litigants/ advocates/ court staff coming with their wheelchairs should be able to go across.
- To add foot-operated features in the lift, taps-in, and other suitable places to enable accessibility in the lift, doors for persons with physical disability with restricted hand movements/hand-related nervous issues upper limb amputees.
- The proposed diversity and exclusivity office should be entrusted to deal with all such requests and accessibility compliance.

12. Pregnant Lawyer/Petitioner in Person:

The women coming with an infant can also be included:

12.1 Challenges:

- No nearby Washrooms available near the court halls.
- The available women's washrooms are not enough to accommodate the footfalls.
- The stakeholders interviewed that the flooring is slippery in many places even making it difficult for normal women to walk across.

12.2 Suggestions:

- Earmarked waiting room for pregnant women /women coming with infants.
- At least one or two washrooms near the courtrooms and waiting room and places where the footfall is very high.

13. Lactation room:

To make the Supreme Court of India more women gender inclusive there is a high time need to have Lactation rooms. These lactation rooms should be

made as dedicated spaces with seating, a table, and more importantly, an electrical outlet, fridge, and sink. It should be a hygienic space where breastfeeding mothers can also have privacy and comfort to pump. These measures will go a long way in the improved mental and physical health of practicing women advocate, Woman advocate clerk, Women registry staff, women litigants, and women who come to the Mediation and Conciliation Center of the Supreme Court to feed mothers.

13.1 Action Point:

Special waiting rooms for women with lactation rooms can be added to have a gender-inclusive building design at the Supreme Court of India.

14. Equitable Toilet For Women:

14.1 Challenge:

- Now considering the number of footfalls of women there are washrooms. In many places, the women have to walk for a long distance when compared with their male counterparts to access the washrooms. But considering the physical anatomy and the special requirement of their monthly mensuration cycle, pregnancy, and feeding mothers there need to be more toilets for women or at least an equitable number of toilets for women.

- The same was also highlighted by the women advocates who were spoken to randomly who highlighted that the women's bar roams washroom are in sufficient and there are many times a queue to access the washroom. They also highlighted most of the young women on Family Way stop their practice as this is also one of the reasons for not being able to continue practice when on Family Way.

14.2 Action Point:

- Equitable washrooms for women with changing rooms be added to have a gender-inclusive building design at the Supreme Court of India.
- To design buildings keeping women in mind as Inclusive design is an important component of the World Green Building Council's (WGBC) Health & Wellbeing Building Framework, which suggests we should plan for access and use by as many people as possible, considering disability, age, and also gender.

15. Senior Citizens:

15.1 Challenges:

The senior citizens who are unable to walk for long distances or climb stairs need to be addressed. There is no prior helpdesk or facility for the senior citizen to ask for the accessibility and exclusivity needs.

15.2 Suggestions:

- The e-Pass software to be enabled with the feature to make online prior accessibility requests by the senior citizens.
- The power wheelchair /manual wheelchair propelled by caretakers is to be made readily available on arrival.
- The Disability and Inclusive section proposed to be in charge of handling the request and its compliance.

16. Conclusion:

- The major action points suggested can be summarized as follows:
- Creating an Accessibility and Inclusion section at the Registry of the Supreme Court of India.

- Adding the Accessibility and inclusivity features under the e-pass software catering to the needs of Women, senior citizens, and Women with infants who come to the Supreme Court of India.

- Adding equitable washrooms, lactation rooms, waiting rooms, and additional creche at the Additional building complex.

- Adding earmarked places for wheelchair users in the auditorium and ensuring the accessibility of ramps to access the stage and podium in the auditorium.

- Digital Platforms and application accessibility audit & Accessibility certification as per STQC certification based on GIGW guidelines and W3GA content.

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COMPOSITION OF
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Professor, National Law School of
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Ms. Shakti Mishra
Librarian,
Supreme Court of India - Member

Shri V. Sridhar Reddy
Advocate, [Nominated by
Supreme Court Bar Association] - Member

Shri Nilesh Singit
Independent Accessibility Expert
[Nominated by the Centre for Disability
Studies (NALSAR University of Law)] - Member

Shri Sunil Chauhan
Additional Registrar,
Supreme Court of India - Member (Secretary)

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Shri Rahul Bajaj Advocate	-	Member
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Shri Rahul Bajaj Advocate	-	Member
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