

Guidelines and toolkits to promote fully accessible schools

India – Samarthyam, National Centre for Accessible Environments

SUMMARY OF PROJECT

Schools are provided with comprehensive design and implementation guidelines and toolkits so as to create safe, equal, and accessible learning environments for children with disabilities. The information in these guidelines and toolkit is based on Indian national codes and space standards, as well as on universal design principles. Together, they provide authorities with infrastructural recommendations; and they provide staff and teachers with curriculum and classroom materials in accessible formats, e-learning technology solutions, and other educational services.

“Schools should be for All: Leave No One Behind in Education and Learning.”

— Mr. Debabrata CHAKRAVARTI, Director & Adaptive Design Unit Access Consultant

FACTS & FIGURES

- Access audits were conducted in 500 schools in 16 states from 2011 to 2014.
- More than 430 state coordinators and block resources persons received technical training on accessible schools in three states from 2014 to 2015.
- 12,000 hard copies of the guidelines were printed and disseminated to 72 schools in four states were renovated into model accessible and inclusive schools in 2014–2015.

PROBLEMS TARGETED

Despite initiatives by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, over the last decade the enrolment of children with disabilities has been less than 1% of all school-aged children in India. Further, girls with disabilities are less likely than boys with disabilities to attend and complete school, particularly in rural settings, due to the absence of accessible toilets on school grounds and because the considerable distance to school makes them more vulnerable to abuse.

SOLUTION & METHODOLOGY

The guidelines and toolkit are prepared to promote access, equity, safety, and gender-neutral learning environments. The information provided is based on research, school access audits (both in rural and urban settings), trainings, and user group inputs. The documents highlight common barriers experienced by children in terms of the physical infrastructure of schools, and they provide cost-effective solutions to overcome them. Essential and non-negotiable universal design elements are provided to help facilitate site-specific solutions.

OUTLOOK & TRANSFERABILITY

The accessibility guidelines and toolkit are used for preparing the Toolkit on Accessibility and Universal Design, an advocacy tool that will guide UNICEF and government staff on raising awareness on disability, on the human rights approaches to disability, and on enforcing the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Hence, these tools have a global reach, and these accessibility standards can be easily adopted in cost-effective ways by using indigenous materials – primarily in low and middle income countries, during emergency responses, and in long-term development contexts

Photo (simulation exercise 3)

Staff members participate in a simulation exercise on what it means to be visually impaired.

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CONTACT

Mr. Debabrata CHAKRAVARTI

Samarthyam, National Centre for Accessible Environments

B-181, Mansarovar Garden New Delhi-110015, India

+91 9810558321, 9711190806

samarthyamindia@gmail.com

www.samarthyam.com

Nominated by: Anjlee AGARWAL, Samarthyam, National Centre for Accessible Environments

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