

Uganda makes accessibility standards mandatory

In many countries in the Global South, accessibility standards do not exist. In the few countries where they exist, they are very often not legally binding, not enforced and not monitored. Uganda is among the first sub-Saharan countries to have developed their own accessibility standards. Uganda's standards are mandatory for school construction projects.

OBLIGATORY ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS

Year of existence:	2010
Country/Region of origin:	Uganda
Beneficiaries targeted:	People with disabilities as well as the elderly, pregnant women
Responsible body:	Government Line Ministries in Disability Issues (Transport, Social, Education, Health)
Stakeholders:	Public, private and not-for-profit sector

FACTS & FIGURES

- Mandatory for school construction projects and other public facilities.
- Adopted by the Uganda Society of Architects.
- Accessibility audits conducted.
- Several court cases filed.
- Disseminated by all the line ministries on disability.

IN BRIEF

Uganda's Accessibility Standards are an important start in advocating and enforcing an accessible environment for all persons, including persons with disabilities. Their objective is to draw up a blueprint and be a tool for measurement, assessment and advising. The Ministry of Education and Sports adopted them for all school construction projects. As part of the Building Control Bill, the Standards will become a requirement for the approval of all construction projects, once the bill is signed into an Act.

INNOVATIVE ASPECTS

- Success of the disability movement**
The driving force for the development of the Standards was Uganda's strong disability movement and its network of representatives of persons with disabilities at all levels.
- A fully accessible trip**
The attention to the entire journey means that persons with disabilities are able to exit their homes, access a sidewalk, reach the building and manoeuvre within the building.
- Monitoring**
A National Accessibility Audit Committee and several District Accessibility Audit Committees were set up, composed of professionals of the built environment, line ministries, and disabled people's organisations.

HISTORY

In 2007, a ministerial report found that 95% of the buildings in Kampala were not accessible, despite the fact that several laws emphasised the need to have an accessible physical environment, such as the Persons with Disabilities Act and National Policy on Disability, both of 2006. One of the reasons for the limited implementation of the accessibility provisions in these laws was the absence of accessibility standards. After an in-depth review of literature, the Uganda National Action on Physical Disability and the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development developed Uganda's first Accessibility Standards with the support of Dansk Handicap Forbund and in consultation with other stakeholders, such as disabled people's organisations, architects, physical planners, building engineers and community development workers, and different government ministries and departments. In May 2010, the Accessibility Standards were published and officially launched.

«We call upon all stakeholders in the construction industry to play their part in making Uganda a barrier-free society by implementing these standards.»

Apollo Mukasa, Uganda National Action on Physical Disability, Uganda



Accessibility Auditing and Advocacy in Uganda (© UNAPD)

environment (barrier-free entrance, parking space, pathways, corridors, urban roads, water and sanitation facilities). They provide a series of practical and detailed plans and maps that planners can use to construct accessible facilities such as toilets, boreholes, etc. They also include provisions on the accessibility of services, information and communication, e.g. public operated machines, and on the use of accessible formats such as sign language, tactile and Braille.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Government Line Ministries in Disability Issues (Transport, Social Development, Education, Health) oversee the implementation of the Standards. With their launch, a National Accessibility Audit Committee was set up, composed of eight professionals of the built environment, line ministries, and disabled people's organisations responsible for enforcing the accessibility requirements and provisions among the relevant stakeholders, service providers and other players. In addition, several districts have set up District Accessibility Audit Committees to supplement the National Committee efforts at the local level.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

One aspect that Uganda - like all countries in the Global South - has to fight is the lack of funding and expertise. Further outreach, dissemination and training are needed. It is crucial that district engineers do not approve building plans that do not adequately respect the accessibility elements. The sanction system is not yet working well because of limited enforcement and supervision.

KEY FEATURES

One guiding principle of the Standards is a fully accessible trip: persons with disabilities must be able to exit their home, access a sidewalk, enter a vehicle, alight from the vehicle onto a sidewalk near the workplace, reach the entrance of the building, manoeuvre within the building and reach their workstation. The Standards highlight the different access barriers faced by people who use wheelchairs and people with limited movements, blind persons and persons with visual impairments, deaf persons and persons with hearing impairments, people with learning or intellectual disabilities, and other groups (such as the elderly). Most importantly, the Standards are to be applied during the design, construction and alteration of buildings and facilities, and cover mainly the built

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