



Guidelines for Universal Accessibility

For Prelims: New Harmonised Guidelines and Standards for Universal Accessibility in India 2021, Central Public Works Department (CPWD), Article 14, UN Convention the Right of Persons with Disabilities, 'Accessible India Campaign', Disability and its types.

For Mains: Disability, Issues related to Disabled People, Related Initiatives.

Why in News

Recently, the **Central Public Works Department (CPWD)** released the **new Harmonised Guidelines and Standards for Universal Accessibility** in India 2021.

- The **new rules** envisage changes from the design plan to the implementation.
- Apart from this, **various aspects of the built environment have been covered** under the new guidelines for universal accessibility.
- Earlier, in 2021 the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting had issued [draft guidelines for new accessibility standards](#).

Central Public Works Department of India

- The Central Public Works Department of India (CPWD), is a **premier Central Government authority in charge of public sector works**.
- It comes under the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA)**.
- It deals with buildings, roads, bridges, flyovers, complicated structures like stadiums, auditoriums, laboratories, bunkers, border fencing, border roads (hill roads), etc.
- It was **established by Lord Dalhousie in 1854**.

Key Points

- **About the New Guidelines:**
 - The guidelines are a revision of the **Harmonised Guidelines and Space Standards for Barrier-Free Built Environment for Persons with Disabilities and Elderly Persons** released in 2016.
 - Earlier, the guidelines were for creating a **barrier-free environment, but now we are focusing on universal accessibility**.
 - **Universal Accessibility** refers to the degree to which the environment, products, and services are accessible to people with disabilities.
 - The term **barrier-free design** used to describe the effort of removing physical barriers from the "built environment" for people with disabilities.

- The **guidelines are not just for Persons with Disabilities (PwD)**, but for those involved in planning projects, from the construction of government buildings to master-planning cities.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA).
- **Constitutional and Legal Framework for Disabled People:**
 - [Article 14](#): The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.
 - In this context, Persons with Disabilities should have similar and equal rights in the eyes of the Constitution.
 - **UN Convention the Right of Persons with Disabilities:** India is a signatory to the [United Nations Convention the Right of Persons with Disabilities](#), which **came into force in 2007**.
 - The Convention recognizes accessibility as a human right and requires signatories to adopt appropriate measures to ensure access by persons with disabilities.
 - **Accessible India Campaign:** The '[Accessible India Campaign](#)' also known as the **Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan** to enable Persons with disabilities to gain universal access, equal opportunity for development.
 - The campaign seeks to enhance accessibility by making significant changes to the infrastructure, information and communication systems.
 - **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016:** The Government of India enacted [The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016](#), which is the principal and comprehensive legislation concerning persons with disabilities.
 - The Act defines the responsibilities of the Central and State governments with regard to the services for persons with disabilities.
 - The Act also recommends creating a barrier-free environment by removing all types of discrimination against persons with disabilities where they can share the development benefits which a normal person enjoys.
- **Other Related Initiatives:**
 - [DeenDayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme](#)
 - [National Fellowship for Students with Disabilities.](#)
 - [Unique Disability Identification Project](#)
 - [International Day of Persons with Disabilities](#)

Disability

- **About:**
 - Disability is a term associated with some **specially-abled people** who sustain a condition that prevents him/her from doing things in the same way as the other people around him.
- **Types of Disability:**
 - **Intellectual disability:** A person having an intellectual disability (ID) is seen to have **low intelligence or rational ability** which is evident in their lack of skills for the basic day to day activities.
 - **Neurological and Cognitive Disorders:** People acquire this type of disability throughout their lifetime, either by a **bad brain injury or multiple sclerosis**.
 - In multiple sclerosis, the cells in a body are attacked by its immune system, thus creating a problem in communication between a body and its brain.
 - **Physical Disability:** It is the most common type of disability found among specially-abled people.
 - These issues can range from the **circulatory system to the nervous system** and

also the respiratory system.

- Cerebral palsy is one such disability that happens because of brain damage and results in problems in movement. The symptoms of such a disability can be seen from birth.
- **Psychiatric Disability:** Such disorders in a person give rise to **anxiety disorders, depression, or various kinds of phobias** in a person.

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