



Advancing the rights and inclusion of people with disabilities worldwide

FACT SHEET: ACCESSIBILITY

Overview

For most people, the term accessibility refers to access: access to information, access to communication and access to basic needs. To disabled people, accessibility is a vital component in achieving their full participation in society; it has become society's responsibility to reduce the barriers that prevent this access. Yet, comparative studies on disability laws show that only 45 countries in the world have disability-specific legislation, including laws related to accessibility, according to UN Enable. One of the most common reasons for not hiring persons with disabilities was the perceived cost of adapting facilities, although 73 percent of employees with disabilities did not require adaptive facilities, and that the cost of accommodations was usually less than USD 500.

Statistics on Accessibility around the world:

- One in five of the world's poorest has a disability, and 82 percent of persons with disabilities live in developing countries, where accessibility is most often non-existent or extremely limited, according to the European Commission.
- The lack of access to the workplace can be a major factor in high levels of unemployment among persons with disabilities, a UN Enable study reported.
- Only one to two percent of persons with disabilities in Africa have access to health care, rehabilitation services and education, according to Disabled People South Africa.
- A survey in India revealed that persons with disabilities face considerable extra costs for assistive devices, appliances, medical reports to certify their disabilities, education and housing modifications, placing many persons with disabilities well below the poverty line.
- A Bangladesh study showed that 57 percent of families with disabled children reported that they also spent between five days and one year's worth of wages on child care, medicine and health care.
- Persons with disabilities make up as much as 17 percent of the Internet-using population of the United States, and between 15 and 30 percent of the world's population have functional limitations that inhibit the ability to technology products, according to the Interactive Media Technology Center (IMTC) at Georgia Tech University.

Accessibility in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:

Article 9 focuses on accessibility as one of the chief areas of responsibility for governments. In order to make accessibility a reality, it is necessary to identify and eliminate barriers that exist in society, particularly with regard to the physical environment, public services, emergency services and information and communications systems. Access can be achieved through various means, including minimum standards development, training, and the promotion of new communication technology or product design, among others.



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Article 9 of the CRPD:

1. States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities have access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas. These measures, which shall include the identification and elimination of obstacles and barriers to accessibility, shall apply to, inter alia:
 - a) Buildings, roads, transportation and other indoor and outdoor facilities, including schools, housing, medical facilities and workplaces;
 - b) Information, communications and other services, including electronic services and emergency services.
2. States Parties shall also take appropriate measures:
 - a) To develop, promulgate and monitor the implementation of minimum standards and guidelines for the accessibility of facilities and services open or provided to the public;
 - b) To ensure that private entities that offer facilities and services which are open or provided to the public take into account all aspects of accessibility for persons with disabilities;
 - c) To provide training for stakeholders on accessibility issues facing persons with disabilities;
 - d) To provide in buildings and other facilities open to the public signage in Braille and in easy to read and understand forms;
 - e) To provide forms of live assistance and intermediaries, including guides, readers and professional sign language interpreters, to facilitate accessibility to buildings and other facilities open to the public;
 - f) To promote other appropriate forms of assistance and support to persons with disabilities to ensure their access to information;
 - g) To promote access for persons with disabilities to new information and communications technologies and systems, including the Internet;

Accessibility affects:

- i. **Education.** Without access to primary and tertiary schools and universities, persons with disabilities cannot attain a decent education and break out of the charity model.
- ii. **Public Transportation.** Without access to economical accessible public transportation, persons with disabilities are homebound and unable to participate in any activities or gainful employment.
- iii. **Health.** Hospitals and clinics are often not accessible, particularly in developing countries, which has a severe impact on the health care services available to persons with disabilities. In addition, hospitals do not always provide sign language interpretation and information in Braille, which hinders the ability of persons with disabilities to receive confidential information.
- iv. **Employment.** Both public and private sector must provide “reasonable accommodation”, which means that modifications and adjustments are made to ensure that persons with disabilities have equal access to the workplace, without undue burdens on the employer.
- v. **Housing.** Because of limited housing that is both accessible and affordable, persons with



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- disabilities have restrictions on where they can live and the costs associated.
- vi. **Sports and Recreation.** Persons with disabilities face challenges to enjoying their right to sports and recreation because the facilities are not always accessible or there are no organized sports for persons with disabilities in their communities. This deprives persons with disabilities with opportunities to improve their strength and confidence.
 - vii. **Tourism.** Persons with disabilities do not have opportunities to take holidays because of limited access to tourist attractions, hotel accommodations, travel modes, museums and shopping.
 - viii. **Information.** There are a great number of people who cannot access information and education, through books, videos, the Internet and other technologies.

RI Advocacy Recommendations on Accessibility

- Governments must ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and fully implement Article 9 as well as other provisions.
- Governments and civil service organizations need to increase the public's knowledge about accessibility and how to make it a reality in their own communities and workplaces.
- Primary and tertiary schools, public transportation, workplaces, health care services and sports and recreational facilities, among others, must be made accessible to persons with disabilities.
- Governments and other organizations must be sure to take account of the specific needs of people with disabilities when designing health, education and other services.
- Efforts must be made to ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with disabilities in the workplace.
- Greater attention must be given to training programs for people to work alongside people with disabilities and as sign language translators and guides.
- More research efforts must focus on accessibility for people with disabilities in developing countries.
- A percentage of accessible housing should be provided to give persons with disabilities a choice of where they wish to live and how much they wish to pay for such accommodation.
- Companies and publishers should books and documents in Braille and adding closed captioning to videos and television programs to greatly increase the access of persons with disabilities.
- NGOS and other groups should organize campaigns to increase awareness and web accessibility to make sure that persons with disabilities benefit from the internet.