

Accessible Delhi

A joint venture of RAJIV GANDHI FOUNDATION and SAMARTHYA

In view of the Common Wealth Games 2010, large scale infrastructure development is being planned all around the capital by the Delhi Administration. It has been observed in the past that due to lack of awareness, the Universal Design (UD) standards were not included/not given due importance in the built and transport environment in the planning stage.

It is heartening to note that the Civic Society has realized the importance of “Inclusive Barrier Free Public Spaces” and have responded positively to the initiatives taken by Samarthya in making of Dilli Haat, Delhi Metro and Low Floor Buses accessible to all, including Persons with Disabilities and Senior Citizens. However, it is realized that to work towards “Making Delhi Accessible” by the year 2010 and to include barrier free design elements in the planning/implementing process, we require people - public partnership especially the architects, planners and civic agencies like NDMC and MCD and the “users”.

Rajeev Gandhi Foundation (RGF) under the Chairpersonship of Hon'ble Sonia Gandhi ji approached Samarthya, to undertake 'Project on Accessible Delhi 2006-2008'.

Objective:

To work towards 'Making of Accessible Delhi', within two years, ensuring access to all public facilities/transportation/built environments

Three pronged approach to achieve the above:

- a) **Access Audits** of the pre selected 20 sites
- b) **Sensitization Workshops** for stake holders and other interested agencies like academic institutions (for example IIT, Delhi; School of Planning and Architecture, Transport planning), Government departments and others.
- c) **“Training of Trainers (TOT) Workshops”** for creation of Resource Pool of Access Auditors.
- d) **Implementation:** All the 20 sites so access audited will be made accessible by the concerned agencies. Samarthya Resource team will also monitor/ evaluate and follow up with the agencies to ensure proper implementation.

“Partnership with Indian Railways”

Samarthyia conducted a “Research Study on Accessibility of Indian Railways” in 2005 to evaluate the existing IR infrastructure and facilities. The Research Study findings supplemented with photographs, cost effective improvement in the existing toilet, tried and tested designs for bridging the gap (i.e. access ramp/platform lift/partially raised platform and both short and perspective planning for the future), were forwarded to Research Designs and Standards Organization (RDSO), sole Research & Design wing of IR and other concerned departments. **IR responded positively to the report, which for the first time carried user’s perspective and initiated consultation with the users.**

The process was further strengthened at the “First National Conference on Accessible Transportation” organized by Samarthyia in March 2006. Following the Conference, Ministry of Railways announced involving Samarthyia in the making of wheelchair-friendly air conditioned (AC) carriages besides the existing Second Class non AC carriages; upgrading existing station facilities; separation of ‘Compartment for Disabled’ from Guard-cum-Luggage carriages and 18 railway stations as models by the year 2012. Samarthyia and Carriages Department, RDSO exchanged drawing layouts and held meetings on anthropometrics and ergonomics: design requirements emergency evacuation, size of the accessible toilet etc. RDSO made a plan based on the above and forwarded the same to Samarthyia for review.

IR and Samarthyia mutually agreed to conduct a mock-up of the accessible toilet size, layout and fittings, along with the coach makers i.e. Integral Coach Factory and Railway Coach Factory. The minimum design framework and standards of fittings was finalized and frozen on 14 December 2006. The mechanisms to bridge the horizontal and the vertical gap between the platform and the coach are also being dealt with currently.

Samarthyia is currently (2007) working on accessible Coaches with toilets and transit/ boarding device with Research Design Standards Organization (RDSO), Rail Coach Factory (RCF) and Integral Coach Factory (ICF), Ministry of Railways, Government of India.



Hindustan Times 28 February 2007

Budget was good news for the disabled

Avishek G. Dastidar
New Delhi, February 27

FOR PASSENGERS with disabilities, this year's Rail Budget ranks as special.

In his Budget speech, Railway Minister Lalu Prasad said the Rail Coach Factory in Kapurthala would roll out special coaches for the disabled, to be attached to major trains "in a phased manner".

"Even in airconditioned coaches, 24 seats will be reserved for such passengers and there will be specially designed toilets. The Rail Coach Factory is in the process of rolling out 1,250 such coaches," he said.

The special coaches have been designed with inputs from two members of NGO Samarthya — Sanjiv Sachdeva and Anjlee Aggarwal, both wheelchair-bound.

"We are very happy because for the first time, such a commitment has been made in the Budget. This will definitely enhance the image of India and the railways globally," Sanjiv told the *Hindustan Times*.

In fact, the process for providing such coaches has already started. Two coaches of the first all-airconditioned Garib Rath Express that left Nizamuddin railway station for Mumbai on Sunday are disabled-friendly.

As for the design of these coaches, credit goes to Sachdeva and Aggarwal.

"We had been in constant touch with railway engineers. On February 11, they sent us a bunch of designs for final approval. We suggested a few minor changes but, overall, the design is just the way we had suggested in several earlier meetings," Sachdeva said.

In December last year, Samarthya had a brainstorming session with officials of the Research Designs and Standards Organisation of the Railways and submitted a detailed presentation (first reported in HT).

"The new coaches mentioned in the Budget are those," said Aggarwal.

avishek.dastidar@hindustantimes.com



“Research study on the Road Safety Aspects for persons with disabilities and implementation strategies” 2006

In order to achieve the goal of Inclusive Environment, Samarthya undertook the first ever Research study with implementation strategies on the “Road Safety Audits- safety aspects & Right of Way” including Streetscaping for persons with disabilities.

With a view to make the Research findings scientifically credible and with scope for implementation, Samarthya approached both Central Road Research Institute (CRRI) for their technical expertise and New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) as implementing agency (the identified site falls in NDMC area). CRRI deputed its Scientists to assist Samarthya’s endeavor supported by ActionAid India. NDMC also welcomed the proposal and offered all assistance.

Samarthya identified and adopted 1 km stretch from RML Hospital to Gol Dak Khana in Central Delhi. The access recommendations by Samarthya are being implemented by NDMC. The study aims at improved ability to deal with the challenges of the urban design environment where the greatest concentrations of vulnerable road users are found and provide universal design in all street/ road elements.

The Research Project will be of immense use to transportation professionals and planners, researchers and academicians, stake holders and service providers in analyzing and reviewing approaches for safe and equitable usage by all sections of the society. It will also assist NGOs, DPOs and user groups to advocate for universal design in street infrastructure, road crossings and other public facilities.