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F. No.4-50/2019-AIC(Pt.)

Government of India

Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment,
Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities
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New Delhi- 110 003समाज कल्याण विभाग का कार्यालय
Office of Social Welfare Department
आवक पत्र
Inward No. 56
दिनांक
Date: 11/9/2020Dated : 13th August, 2020

To,

Principal Secretaries,
Social Welfare Department,
All States/UTs

As you are aware, the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment launched the Accessible India Campaign (AIC) or the Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan with the vision of creating a barrier free environment. Grant-inAid for this purpose has been provided to States/UTs for retrofitting selected buildings for making them universally accessible under Phase I of AIC. Upon completion of retrofitting in the said buildings, States/UTs are required to carry out Verification Audits in order to ensure that accessibility related works have been carried out as per the Access Audit Reports and the *Harmonized Guidelines & Space Standards for Barrier Free Built Environment for Persons with Disability and Elderly Persons*.

2. While assessing the data being uploaded on the MIS portal of AIC by States/UTs, it has come to notice that not all buildings have been retrofitted according to the required levels and features of accessibility. Thus, in order to do timely course correction as well as to ensure that similar problematic issues may not be repeated while providing accessibility in remaining buildings in Phase I, II and III of AIC, it is advisable that Verification Audits be got conducted at the earliest by States/UTs in buildings where the work of retrofitting has been completed.

3. To this intent and purpose, it is suggested that at a first level, the exercise of Verification Audits could be immediately carried out through Student Engagement Programs wherein students of reputed local colleges/institutes of Architecture and Design could conduct the audit under the supervision of their expert faculties. This would lead to a quick interim verification audit being done to know if the features of accessibility are being provided properly and adequately. It would also help in sensitizing students of architecture in accessibility related matters and increase awareness in society about the importance of having a culture of universal accessibility.

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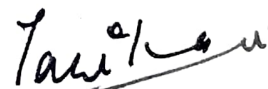
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4. In this regard, it is informed that DEPwD undertook a Pilot Student Engagement Project within a short span of time in Chandigarh City for its buildings retrofitted under AIC through Chandigarh College of Architecture (CCA) and its results have been encouraging. Thirty-nine buildings were audited by CCA within 15 days and a detailed report was submitted by CCA. The officials of Chandigarh Administration i.e. Director of Social Welfare Department Engineers and Architects from Public Works Department, etc. were involved in the exercise right from the orientation session onwards. This ensured smooth coordination while undertaking the Verification Audits and sensitized the officials involved about the requirements as well as the inadequacies noticed. The report submitted by CCA brought out the gaps in accessibility provided in the said buildings. The report has since been shared with Chandigarh Administration for taking appropriate action.
5. On similar lines, Departments of Social Welfare in States/UTs (being the nodal agencies of AIC) may undertake exercises for verification audits where retrofitting work has been completed for buildings under AIC by engaging the local Colleges Institutes of Architecture and Design in respective cities/regions. The concerned executing agencies (Architects, Engineers Officers from State PWD, R&B Department, Engineering Services, etc.) as well as Persons with Disabilities should be involved in the exercise. Upon the receipt of Verification Audit Report, executing agencies should be tasked to carry-out the required action before the building can be declared fully accessible by States/UTs, post a full-fledged verification audit being done. As a token of appreciation, State/UTs Government Departments may consider giving Certificates of Appreciation and/or a small honorarium to the team members undertaking the verification audits for helping the government in the mission towards the built infrastructure being made accessible.
6. The details of the methodology followed and the work order issued for this exercise by DEPwD is annexed for ease of reference (**Annexure A**). Should any further assistance be required in this regard, Shri Vikash Prasad, Director, DEPwD (Phone no. 011-24364391, email: vikash.prasad@gov.in) may be contacted.
7. In view of the above, State/UT governments may commence the process of Verification Audits on priority. It is emphasized that to extend the benefits of equal opportunity and participation to persons with disabilities, it is important that compliance of standards for accessibility is maintained and the work of ensuring a barrier free environment is taken up on mission mode as mandated in the RPwD Act, 2016.

Yours sincerely,



(Tarika Roy)
Joint Secretary

Methodology for Verification Audit of Buildings retrofitted under AIC through Student's Engagement Program

For conducting verification audits through the Students Engagement Program, the following methodology may be adopted:

- i. **Identification** - Selecting city (applicable for States where AIC is being implemented in more than one city) and preparation of the list of buildings where work has been completed under AIC, so that these buildings can be taken up for auditing. Respective executing agencies must be involved in the exercise from this stage itself.
- ii. **Nomination** – Based on locally available options of institutes/ colleges of architecture and design in the city or region, single or multiple institutes may be selected for conducting the verification audit.
- iii. **Planning and Initiation** –
 - a. **Broad scope of work and term of references** for executing the exercise to be formulated, collaboratively with selected institute and concerned executing agency/ agencies for the area/city/region (Copy of the Work Order used for the pilot project in Chandigarh attached for ease of reference).
 - b. **Schedule of work** to be prepared and work awarded accordingly.
 - c. **A sensitization workshop** to be conducted for the team which will conduct the survey through experts available in the State Department or Executing Agency or through Access Auditors who had conducted accessibility audits in these buildings under AIC. If additional technical support is required, DEPwD may be approached with a request for the same and a video conference could be organized for briefing the team of officials and/or students.
- iv. **Execution** – Following the sensitization workshop, the students shall conduct the site visit and prepare a report of findings and recommendations.
 - a. It must be ensured that **students are supervised by expert faculty members or appointed experts** during the entire course of this exercise. The team **should also involve Persons with Disabilities from all types of disabilities** i.e. visual, physical, hearing etc. and their feedback and experience to be also given in the Verification Audit Report.
 - b. **The verification audit may be conducted with regards to the 10 key features of accessibility (i.e. 3 outdoor features namely access route, parking and ramped entrance with handrails; and 7 indoor features namely accessible reception, corridor with tactile tiles, staircase with handrails, accessible lifts, accessible toilets, accessible drinking water facility and signage) as has been identified by DEPwD, based on the Harmonized Guidelines issued by CPWD, MoHUA.[copy of the 10 features enclosed].**

- v. **Action on Report** -The report must be acted upon immediately by Executing Agency and after rectification, Executing Agency should submit their final report to the Social Welfare Department of the State/UT who will finally declare the building to be completed and made accessible.
- vi. **The findings shall also be uploaded on the MIS portal for AIC.**
- vii. **Appreciation** – As decided by State /UT/Government. DEPwD had given a small token honorarium of Rs. 2000 per building only. A Certificate of Appreciation was given to each participant of this programme.

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