

Technical Assistance Strategy

City Engagement Strategies for BASiIC Programme



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1. Overview of the Programme and Purpose of the Document

The consultation organised on 11th September 2018 in collaboration with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) and National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) paved the way towards ensuring universal accessibility within the urban environment of the Indian cities. The experts' insights focussed on the need for integrating Divyang-friendly measures across urban policy and project level interventions in the Smart Cities in India.

It is in this context that the project, 'Building Accessible Safe Inclusive Indian Cities (BASIIIC)' was implemented by NIUA with support from the Foreign Commonwealth Development Office (formerly DFID) of the UK Government. The project objective was to promulgate the above in the ethos of urban planning and design through policy level interventions, capacity building, pilot demonstration of urban innovative solutions and implementation of robust monitoring systems to sustain the efforts in the long run. The key objectives of the project are:

- Consolidation of definitions, concepts, policies, provisions, and practice w.r.t. persons with disabilities in India.
- Mapping the major areas of opportunity in implementation of policies and provisions at city level and replicable solutions for making cities more accessible and inclusive for persons with disabilities.
- Develop a replicable monitoring and evaluation framework for pilot cities to assess and improve their standards of universal access and inclusivity.

Building Accessible, Safe and Inclusive Indian Cities (BASIIIC) Programme was implemented by the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) to support Indian cities towards ensuring universal accessibility. The programme worked towards achieving the following outcomes:

- Outcome 1 - Easing the understanding of policies and provisions related to disability for relevant stakeholders/practitioners.
- Outcome 2 - Develop a comprehensive repository of contextual challenges, possible solutions, toolkits and experts in matters pertaining to persons with disabilities in urban India.
- Outcome 3 - Developing an ecosystem of city stakeholders which can help sustain the above solutions.
- Outcome 4 - Capacity building and dissemination of knowledge with disability inclusion.

BASIIIC augmented and strengthened the institutional capacities of cities to be sensitive to the needs of persons with disabilities and other marginalised groups. Since 2019, the programme has been actively working with key stakeholders to mainstream the dialogue on accessibility and inclusion to build "cities for all". The key beneficiaries identified for the programme were persons with disabilities including children, women and old persons.

Figure 1: Targeted Beneficiaries



2. Purpose of the Document

The document highlights the approach and strategy adopted to identify, select and collaborate with partner cities. It explores various characteristics and state of existing infrastructure/services which define a city. The document would act as a guide to assess the urban functions and management, and identify the existing urban issues/challenges. It also explains the approach for formulation of city specific strategies to facilitate technical assistance and support for Urban Local Bodies in mitigating the urban issues both at the policy and project level.

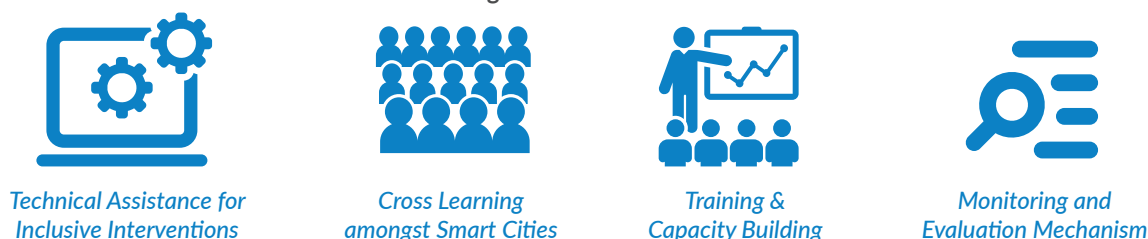
3. Technical Assistance Strategy for Partner City

The technical assistance component of the engagement involved sharing information and expertise, instruction, skills training, transfer of technical working knowledge and technical data. The engagement also played a crucial role in bringing policy and institutional reforms within the city administrative set up, creating sensitization and awareness about urban issues associated with disability amongst the city stakeholders and building the capacities at local level to mitigate the challenges. The strategy also aimed at assisting the city decision-makers/leaders in structuring inclusive policies/programmes, enforcing evidence-based inclusive planning mechanisms, enhancing active participation of Persons with Disabilities within the project cycle as well as in the decision making process.

The programme collaborated with two partner cities to facilitate technical assistance and transform the urban centres to address the spatial, socio-economic and attitudinal barriers associated with disabilities. The technical strategy for the partner city was tailored to the needs of the city and the focus area of the city interventions were based on the priorities and vision of inclusive, resilient and sustainable development. It also aimed to establish alignment with the objectives of the ongoing missions/schemes implemented at a city level. The key learnings and insights of the programme would be disseminated across cities and stakeholders for knowledge transfer and future reference.

The programme also set up a Technical Assistance Support Unit (TASU) at NIUA to support the partner cities for mainstreaming disability inclusion in urban development. Following are the key focus areas for supporting the partner cities:

Figure 2: Focus Areas



The TA for cities covered the following aspects:

- Provide technical support for implementing innovative interventions at the pilot scale.
- Providing need-based technical assistance from subject matter experts for updating the existing DPRs/feasibility reports w.r.t. BASIIC tenets for the ongoing city interventions.
- Sharing knowledge and building capacities of city authorities on technical know-how to achieve disability inclusion across sectors.
- Adopting a cross learning approach where the pool of shortlisted smart cities can learn from each other about best practices through conduction of national/state/city level workshops.
- Creating an e-knowledge sharing platform to learn from global and national best practices.

The TA recommendations for the city governments emphasised on the adoption and implementation of inclusive development strategies, enforcing policies and solutions, guiding cities on the use of technology and innovation to deliver sustainable urban development outcomes. The experience and learnings of working with cities have been documented in this report for dissemination across all smart cities to adopt and replicate tailor-made and contextualised solutions in the cities.

3.1. Approach and Methodology Adopted

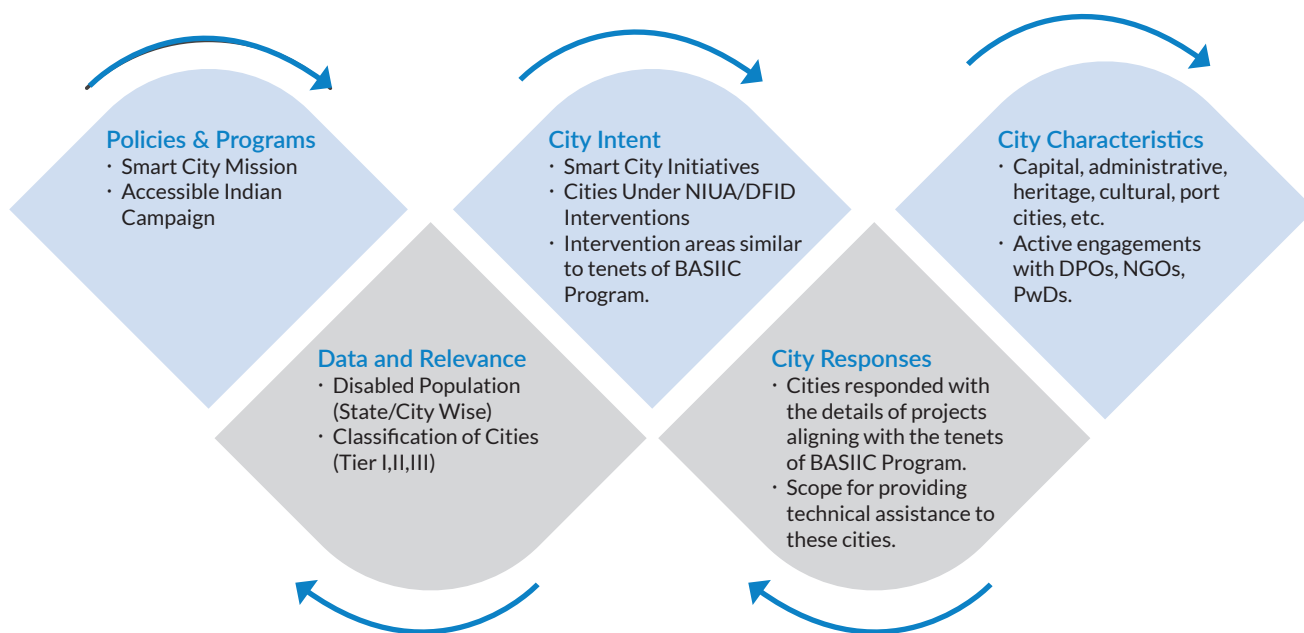
A city assessment framework (Annexure: I) was developed to identify a probable list of Indian cities best suited to deliver the technical assistance to mainstream disability inclusive interventions. The framework was developed to map the efforts of cities selected under the India Smart Cities Mission along with ongoing missions (AIC, HRIDAY, AMRUT, etc.) which focuses on achieving inclusive and sustainable development. The exercise assisted to account the spatially contextual variations existing in the Indian Cities, analysing the common urban issues/challenges, identifying the scope for sectoral and financial convergence, and establishing alignment of objectives with BASIIC programme.

The following criteria/indicators were considered a part of the assessment framework.

- **Ongoing Policies & Programmes** (convergence between missions such as India Smart Cities Missions, Accessible India Campaign, AMRUT, etc.).
- **Data Relevance** (Tier-wise classification for cities, city and state-wise disabled population, characteristics of cities).
- **City Intent** (Similar Interventions across ongoing schemes/missions, stage of implementation, the scope for convergence/dovetailing with ongoing projects, source of funds, etc.)
- **NIUA/DFID Intervention Cities** (leveraging the existing partnerships established at the cities, amplifying the impact of the project through collaborative efforts, learnings from the city-specific issue/challenges).

The below flowchart gives a brief overview of the city assessment framework:

Figure 3: City Assessment Framework



In addition to the secondary research, the efforts of smart cities focusing on inclusive urban development were mapped based on the online-based project template. The exercise was conducted in consultation with SCM-MoHUA and FCDO (erstwhile referred to as DFID). The components of the template aimed to capture the details and progress of similar interventions that are being implemented in each of the cities. The thorough analysis of wide responses from the cities had assisted in understanding their approach towards inclusive development as well as mapping the technical, financial and implementation related issues faced by them for transforming their urban centres as inclusive for all.

The key insights from the assessment were collated in the form of Cities Insights Report. The report captured the initiatives being adopted by the thirteen smart cities to develop urban centres as accessible, safe and inclusive for all. In addition, the efforts of the additional twenty two smart cities under the several ongoing mission/schemes (AMRUT, SCM, AIC) of GoI were mapped to identify the scope for sectoral and financial convergence. Based on the findings, the intervention strategy for partner cities indicated in the report aimed to assist the city decision-makers/leaders in structuring inclusive policies/programmes, enforcing evidence-based inclusive planning mechanisms, enhancing active participation of persons with disabilities within the project cycle as well as in the informed-decision making process. It further stressed upon the integrated, participatory and collaborative efforts of city stakeholders to conduct city-wide audit of infrastructure services, maintaining a disaggregated database on persons with disabilities. It is to assist the informed decision-making process, enable local partnerships, involve Disabled Peoples Organizations/persons with disabilities and develop an evaluation platform to monitor the progress of inclusive interventions at city level.

3.2. Outcome of the City Selection Process

Based on the city assessment framework and inferences drawn from the response of Smart Cities towards the Smartnet hosted template, TASU identified a pool of five cities namely Chennai, Chandigarh, Varanasi, Kanpur and Jaipur. The flowchart below establishes the linkages between various criteria/indicators which have been taken into account to shortlist the cities. The following table post-flowchart gives an overview of the strategy that was adopted for shortlisting the below-mentioned five cities:

Table 1: List of Shortlisted Cities

Sl. No.	Name of the City	Characteristics of the City	Shortlisting Strategy
1.	Chennai	Capital	The Persons with Disabilities population in Chennai comprises of around 3.5% of the total demographic share. The city has innovative measures to make it accessible for all. The learnings from such initiatives can be replicated in other cities under BASIIC program.
2.	Chandigarh	Administrative/ Capital	Being an administrative capital, it has immense opportunities to take innovative measures to address the barriers to inclusion and set an example. The city is in the process of implementing similar interventions where TASU can leverage technical assistance to implement them.
3.	Varanasi	Heritage	The city has immense potential to promote inclusive tourism and develop Disability-Inclusive infrastructure based on universal design principles. This would also lead to enhance the untapped tourism potential and promote economic growth.
4.	Kanpur	Industrial	Uttar Pradesh has the highest share of Persons with Disabilities Population across India. In addition, NIUA is also implementing other projects in the city. Working with Kanpur would assist in leveraging already established administrative partnerships and fast track the program activities.
5.	Jaipur	Capital/Heritage	Being a UNSECO Heritage city, Jaipur has immense scope to promote inclusive tourism sector.

3.3. Induction and Partnership Formalisation

An induction session was organised with senior officials in the above cities, to gauge the perspective of key city stakeholders. These included municipal commissioners, CEOs of the Smart City SPVs, nodal officers from social welfare departments, and others. The team also connected with the civil society organisations working with and for persons with disabilities on the need and context for planning and designing cities that are accessible for all. These interactions also assisted in mapping the intent of implementing the pilot interventions that align with the BASIIC tenets and would facilitate in identifying scope to collaborate with the cities under the program.

Based on the city's response and intent, Varanasi city was selected as the partner city for the programme. The oldest living city of India, Varanasi, aspires to leverage its place as the soul of India through inclusive and innovative solutions that enhance quality of life while positioning itself as the world's cultural and spiritual destination.

3.4. Scoping of Pilot Interventions

Based on the key findings from cities based on online exercise and mapping of cities efforts from the city assessment framework, a broad list of sector specific interventions was developed to understand the scope of implementing similar interventions at a pilot scale in the partner cities. Technical support based on 'universal design/inclusive planning and design principles' has been leveraged to the cities to prioritise and implement the suggestive list of pilot scale interventions with the technical support of BASIIC program.

The below illustrated table gives a brief roadmap for implementing sector specific interventions at the city level:

Table 2: List of Pilot Interventions

S. No	Sectors	Focus Area under Each Sector	Indicative list of Pilot Interventions
1.	Policy and Legislation Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Model Building Bye-laws Development Control Regulations Master Plan, Regional Plan Local Area Plans (TPS, Zonal Plan) Special Purpose Plan (CDP, CMP, CSP, DMP, SRP, TMP, HMP) Project Specific DPRs/ Feasibility Studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updating of Model Building Bye-laws (MBBL)/Development Control Norms to incorporate inclusive planning and design principles. Guidelines pertaining to preparation of Master Plans/Local area Plan/Town Planning Schemes to adhere to inclusive planning and design principles. Sector specific plans/project DPRs adhere to "Audit tool Kit" to be prepared under BASIIC program. Compliance of Building Approval Plan System with accessibility/inclusivity/safety features
2.	Institutional Level Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smart Cities: Special Purpose Vehicle Municipal Corporation Development Authorities Town & Country Planning Organization (TCPO) Social Welfare Dept 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision for inclusion of a nodal officer in City Level Advisory Forum (CLAF)/Board of Directors under SCM. Efforts for convergence of Inter departmental engagements in partner cities to focus on inclusive urban development
3.	Built Environment (Physical Infrastructure)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing complexes Educational Institutions Office & Workplace Commercial areas Sanitation facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making the built environment accessible through incorporation of Ramps, braille equipped signs, soft landscaping, smart signage, Staircase/Lifts/Handrails/ Lighting, etc. Accessible Public Sanitation Facilities (Barrier-free toilets)
4.	Social Infrastructure (Public Utilities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to Education Healthcare Services Socio-cultural Centres Rehabilitation centres Religious centres Public Services (Banking/ Postal/Telephone/ Police) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to Digital Education/health facilities Accessible religious sites/cultural centres Livelihood & Employment opportunities Digitally inclusive public engagement platforms/door to door service delivery system
5.	Recreational Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parks & Playgrounds Museums/Gallery/Cinema Halls/Sport Facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open spaces/recreational zones to be designed based on the concept of Universal Design Principles. Accessible and safe Public Realm (e.g., Riverfront, public plaza, etc.) Use of ICT solutions to make infrastructure accessible to all.
6.	Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Road /street design/Parking Public Transport Facilities (Bus/Railways/ Airways Accessible waterways/ MRT) Para Transit Systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accessible Public Transport/Paratransit System Accessible Pedestrian Pathways (Street Furniture/ Wheelchair access/Tactile Paving/Wayfinding and Orientation & Signage/Obstruction free footpaths with ramps, bollard spacing for wheelchair users, audio signals for crossings). Digital enabled smart cards Smart kiosk under integrated transport system, smart bus shelters/stops.
7.	Inclusive Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accessible Infrastructure for Tourist/heritage Sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barrier-free access to heritage/tourists' sites ICT enabled heritage app Availability of wheelchairs, audio guides within the heritage sites Pedestrianization of heritage walks (wheelchair access) Accessibility Plan for Ghats/Riverfronts
8.	ICT (Each sector should focus on Developing Digitally Inclusive infrastructure)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accessible ICT/Digital inclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to online applications and websites IT-enabled government services Access to mobile based applications Online portals for empowering PwDs.

4. Partnership with Varanasi City

As an outcome of the city selection process, Varanasi was selected as the partner city under the programme. Under the India Smart Cities Mission, Varanasi has made tremendous efforts to create adaptive, inclusive and resilient infrastructure which also assisted to mitigate the impact of Covid-19. The unique characteristics and organic pattern of development in the city have led to excellent learning which has helped in understanding the existing barriers and challenges related to inaccessibility, particularly with regard to heritage, culture and tourism. Varanasi Smart City Ltd. (VSCL) and NIUA formalized the partnership through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in May, 2020. The partnership envisaged to support VSCL's vision of 'Suramya, Samunnat, Surakshit, Sanyojit, Nirmal Ekikrit Kashi', to reinforce the aim of a "Sugamya Kashi" for all. Supporting VSCL & VNN in their ongoing and pilot implementation projects was a priority engagement under the scope of the partnership. The technical assistance also resulted in leveraging support for additional projects/interventions. This included, but was not limited to, the facilitation of exchange of knowledge with national and international agencies and experts, dissemination of learnings from global/national practices and mainstreaming of disability-inclusion reforms at the institutional and policy level.

The partnership aimed to work on the basis of a collaborative model through the establishment of a stakeholder network working across various facets of Disability Inclusive Accessible Urban Development. It would also set an example for other cities in championing disability inclusion based on the narrative of policy, people and practice approach.

Based on the city selection strategy, TASU had undertaken various city level activities as per the BASIIC Program timeline. The outcomes assisted in understanding the need for planning and designing cities while addressing the barriers to inclusion faced by Persons with Disabilities (irrespective of age, ability and gender) and adhering to the existing policies/guidelines and building norms. The city engagement had further assisted in identifying the gaps and challenges faced by the city decisionmakers/leaders during the planning, designing and implementation of pilot interventions. The collaborative and participatory engagement of the city stakeholders had benefited the city in building a knowledge-based platform and the technical capacities of the city officials about various facets of Disability-Inclusive development. The broad list of the city intervention activities would be described as below:

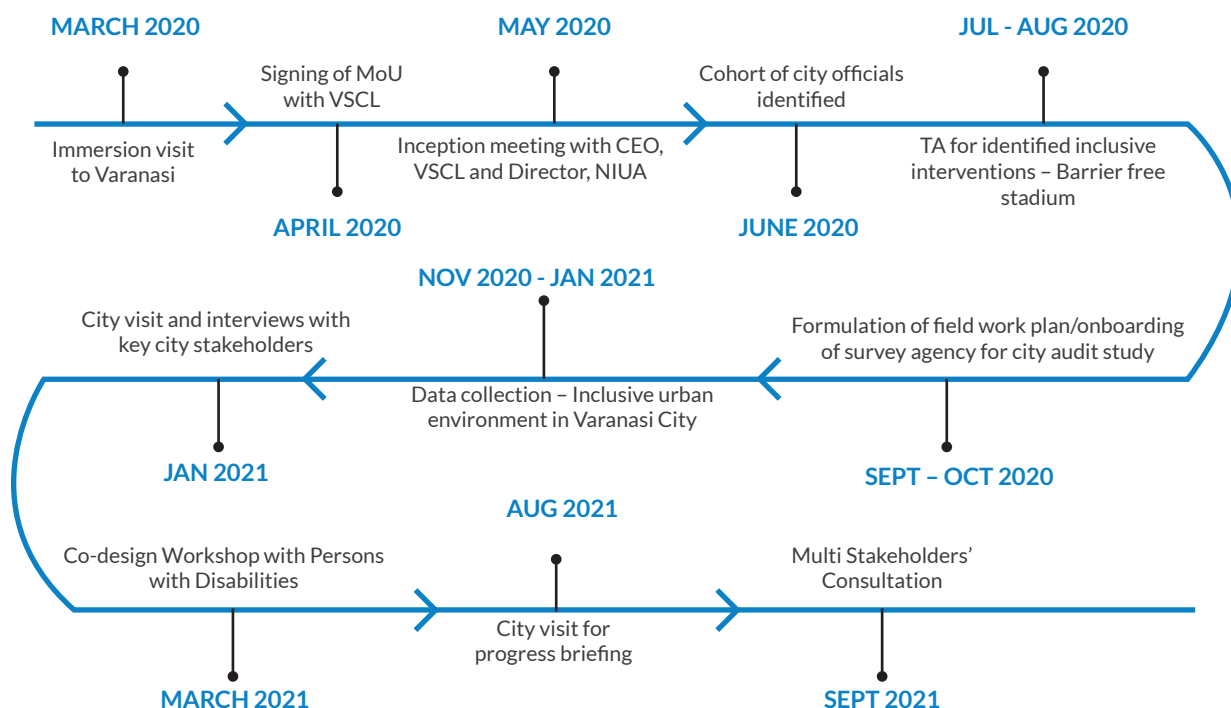
Figure 4: List of City Engagement Activities



5. Details of City Intervention

TASU facilitated Varanasi Smart City Ltd (VSCL) in various inclusive projects, research and advocacy level interventions in Varanasi and had extended strategic support to VSCL and VNN for their ongoing and pilot implementation projects. The partnership had also facilitated exchange of knowledge and dissemination of learnings from global/national practices and support for implementing institutional/policy reforms to promote inclusion and universal access for persons with disabilities. The progress and timeline of the city engagement could be described as follows:

Figure 5: Timeline and Progress under the programme



5.1. Inclusive Interventions

TASU and VSCL conducted a thorough evaluation of the current and future projects in Varanasi to establish the scope the technical assistance focussed on disability inclusion and universal design. Subsequently, a few rounds of high level meetings were organised with the Municipal Commissioner/CEO of Varanasi to concur on the three ongoing city level interventions (listed below) that would benefit the most from TA. The following table summarizes the broad contours of the three finalized projects:

Table 3: List of Inclusive Interventions

Sl. No.	Name of the Project	Project Factsheet	Broad Objectives	Stakeholders Involved
1.	Redevelopment of Dr. Sampurnan and Sports Stadium (Proposed Stage)	<p>Area – 64648.391 Sq. Mt. (15.97 Acres).</p> <p>Budget - INR 111.08 Crore to be funded under the Smart Cities Mission.</p> <p>Type of Intervention - Inclusive Recreational Facilities Barrier Free Sports Infrastructure Enhancing the city's economic productivity</p> <p>Targeted Beneficiaries - Persons with disabilities Sports Persons Women Children Elderly Persons Citizens of the city Tourists</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To create a barrier free/ disable friendly sports facility To uplift the sports infrastructure as a world class facility To develop an integrated sports facility that follows SAI guidelines To promote sports tourism and encourage sports mapped to local culture and context 	<p>Varanasi Smart City Limited would be responsible for overall designing and planning the project.</p> <p>A consulting firm would be onboarded by VSCL on EPC model to implement the project.</p>

Sl. No.	Name of the Project	Project Factsheet	Broad Objectives	Stakeholders Involved
2.	Redevelopment and Landscaping of Beniya Bagh Park (Implementation Stage)	<p>Area - 52454.00 sq. m. or 12.96 acres.</p> <p>Budget - INR 92 Crores</p> <p>Type of Intervention - Inclusive Recreational Spaces</p> <p>Targeted Beneficiaries - Persons with Disabilities (irrespective of age ability & gender) Women Children Elderly Persons Transgender Urban poor</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To serve the purpose of reducing the surrounding traffic congestion by creating an underground basement (two levels) parking infrastructure. • To improve the urban environment and to humanize these infrastructures, reclaim the underutilized spaces, a Landscape Area would be developed above basement parking. • To develop a sprawling green public park in the heart of the old city which shall serve the local community as well as tourists. • To preserve the historical significance & associational value of the park and important features inside it. 	Varanasi Smart City Limited is responsible for overall designing and planning the project.
3.	Street Redevelopment Project (a stretch of 1.2 km (between Sajan Tiraha to Rath Yatra Chowk) (Design Stage)	<p>Area - stretch of 1.2 km extending between Sajan Tiraha to Rath Yatra Chowk</p> <p>Budget - INR 98 crores (overall project Cost)</p> <p>Type of Intervention - Improve Walkability/Pedestrianisation Infrastructure</p> <p>Targeted Beneficiaries - Persons with Disabilities (irrespective of age ability & gender) Women Children Elderly Persons Transgender Urban poor</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ease the existing traffic congestion and improve vehicular/pedestrian movement in the ABD area. • To improve its connectivity with the other surrounding areas. • The stretch to be developed based on the concept of inclusive design aspects. • To create scope for integrating formal spaces/vending zones. • To improve walkability and pedestrian infrastructure. 	Varanasi Smart City Limited is responsible for overall designing and planning the project.

TASU had developed project specific recommendations/checklist (please refer to the annexure section of the document). The recommendations for universal design features would be relevant for the city stakeholders to plan, design, implement and monitor such infrastructure in adherence/compliance with the necessary standards/norms. It would act as a checklist for the designers/planners to integrate the elements of universal design features for conceptualising and designing similar projects. By developing project specific inclusive design and planning elements, the activities were aligned to meet the Outcome 2 of the programme. This would equip the city stakeholders to plan, design and implement similar inclusive interventions in the city.

Figure 6: Existing site conditions of the above listed projects



5.2. Establishing Ecosystems of City Stakeholder's

Aligned with Outcome 3 of the programme, TASU had along with the creation of an ecosystem consisting the city officials from the relevant departments namely VNN, VDA, Tourism, Health, Education, DEPwD, etc), it had also carried out the identification of civil society organisations and academia.

Such an approach allowed the team to identify opportunities to integrate disability inclusion and universal design ideas at various levels and sectors of urban development. Subsequently, a point of Contact (PoC) was identified in each of the relevant departments/institutions. The local civil society, particularly those with focus on improving the access to basic services and infrastructure of the vulnerable/marginalised communities were actively involved in various research and on-ground activities under the programme. The grass-root nature of these organisations was pivotal in establishing and understanding the key challenges associated with living with disability in an urban environment as unique as Varanasi. The in-depth interactions with the civil society and citizenry also facilitated the scoping of innovative urban solutions for implementation at a pilot scale. Through BASIIC, local organisations i.e. Kiran Society, MSS India, M-Insure, etc. were engaged.

A key achievement of the technical assistance for the city were the linkages that were established in the city on the topic of disability. The city administration also greatly benefits from such linkages especially in contextualizing their efforts and prioritizing the needs of the marginalized groups. On the other hand, the civil society and citizenry, through these interactions were able to develop strong relationships with the city authorities which led to the expression of their needs and issues in a more organic manner. The local ecosystem in Varanasi comprised of the following key stakeholders:

Figure 7: City Ecosystem

Sl. No.	Key Stakeholders	Concerned City Sectors/ Elements	Roles and Responsibilities
1.	City Municipal Corporation City Development Authority Smart City's Special Purpose Vehicle Public Works Dept.	Built Environment Street Improvement WASH Utilities Recreational Facilities Parks & Open Spaces Public Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formulate and implement urban development schemes/ missions, related projects and strategies at the city level. Ensure access to basic infrastructure (water supply, sewerage, SWM, open spaces, recreational facilities, etc.)
2.	Dept. of Empowerment for Persons with Disabilities	Socio-economic upliftment of persons with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure implementation and operation of beneficiaries' schemes related to disability inclusion. Ensure equal access to education, employment opportunities and related basic services for Persons with disabilities.
3.	Tourism Dept.	Tourism based infrastructure/services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure development, promotion, expansion and maintenance of tourism-related infrastructure and services in the city.
4.	Traffic & Transportation Dept.	Improvement and maintenance of Roads, Streets, Operation of Public Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan, operate and maintain hassle-free inter and intra city road connectivity for all.
5.	Education Dept.	Access to education for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of the education and health infrastructure/ services at the city level as per the mandate of relevant standards/byelaws.
6.	Dept. of medical health & family Welfare	Access to health services	
7.	Disabled Peoples' Organization	Advocacy efforts to address grass root level challenges related to accessibility and inclusivity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake advocacy-based efforts to bring policy level changes. Ensure access to equal rights and opportunities for persons with disabilities.
8.	Citizens & communities (pilgrims, tourists, urban poor, migrants, etc.)	Lived experiences in an urban environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active Participation in the city advocacy, planning and development process to have equal access to rights and basic services.
9.	Persons with Disabilities	Inaccessibility related issues in the urban environment.	

5.3. Research Initiatives

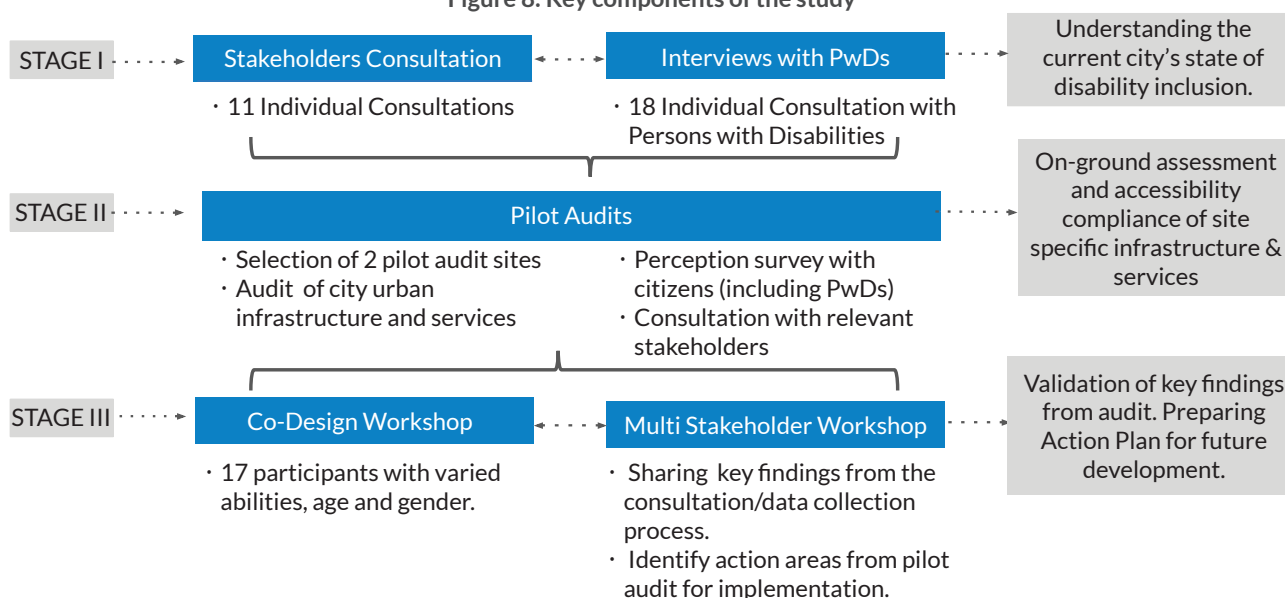
City audit-assessment study (in collaboration with Global Disability Innovation Hub, London)

As a research initiative, a city audit and assessment study on disability inclusion was conducted in Varanasi. The study focused on understanding the current approach and mapping the city level efforts across urban planning, policy, practices to transform Varanasi City as accessible, safe and inclusive for all. The study was conducted in collaboration with the Global Disability Innovation Hub (GDI Hub), a UK-based academic research centre and community interest company.

The qualitative assessment part of the study was developed by GDI Hub which focuses on building understanding about the current awareness and application of inclusive planning and design approaches. The quantitative component of the study was designed by BASIIC team to capture the performance of urban development initiatives (policy and project interventions) through the use of an audit framework. This framework was developed to measure the performance of pan-city/site-specific initiatives with respect to the accessibility benchmarks/standards and assess their compliance with policies/guidelines/development norms across various urban pillars and categories.

The structure and components of the study could be described as follows:

Figure 8: Key components of the study



The audit exercise had assisted in measuring the accessibility of major infrastructure within the pilot sites in compliance with the accessibility standards and guidelines. The exercise had assisted in identifying scope for improvement or areas of opportunities for retrofitting or redevelopment of the sector-specific infrastructure. The sector-wise recommendations of the study would also serve as a roadmap for the city stakeholders to integrate the recommendations within the city infrastructure development plan. The key outcomes and major achievements of the study included the following components:

- Pilot Audits - Piloted at two sites within the city (of heritage, tourism, commercial, administrative and institutional importance)
- Audit Framework - 14 Urban sector-specific components audited; 35 diverse Key Performance Areas; 104 Assessment Indicators mapped within the sites.
- Interviews with Persons with Disabilities - 18 in nos.
- Interviews with City Officials - 11 in nos.
- City Wide Survey - 11 city officials participated
- Co-design workshop - 17 participants (varied abilities, age and gender)
- City Stakeholders' Consultation - 30 participants
- Recommendations - Specific recommendations for 7 urban sectors (Mobility, WASH, Tourism, Recreational Spaces, Public Services, Health, Education)

5.4. Covid Support Strategy

TASU identified certain key initiatives to leverage Covid-19 Support Strategy as part of the Technical Assistance Support to partner cities. Under the strategy, it aimed to create a hub of local support systems (NGOs, DPOs, Citizen Groups, etc.) and build the capacities of the stakeholders to ensure efficient service-delivery of the ongoing city-based COVID-19 initiatives and would act as a handholding support to VSCL/VNN. The efforts aimed to improve the access to basic services during the peak COVID-19 period for city dwellers, especially the marginalized and vulnerable communities. The strategy focused on providing support to the cities under the following five action areas:

- Involvement of city-based DPOs/NGOs
- Promote Digital Accessibility
- Access to Right Information
- Inclusive Vaccination Strategy
- Outreach of COVID-19 related information
- Mental Health Awareness

6. Key Outcomes

The outward facing activities of the programme had played a crucial role in bringing institutional and policy reforms which are necessary to mainstream the narrative of disability inclusion within the administrative set up of the city. The efforts also created a sense of awareness amongst the city stakeholders about the barriers associated with disabilities in an urban environment. This identified certain areas of scope for improvement and opportunities for implementation of inclusive policies or provisions at city level. It also helped in identifying best practices for replication at a pilot scale or at a pan-city level. The outcomes of the programme could be highlighted under the following categories:

6.1. Sensitising and Creating Awareness about Disability Inclusion

The participatory and collaborative approach adopted for city engagement had assisted in understanding the grass-root level issues related to inaccessibility in Varanasi City. The advocacy efforts and insights from the consultative process acted as a revelation for the stakeholders to understand the challenges and barriers faced by Persons with Disabilities (irrespective of age, ability, and gender). It also acted upon several measures to improve urban governance and institutional mechanisms. The collaborative efforts of the city stakeholders had also played an important role in building the narrative of disability inclusion and mainstreaming the mandates across policy and project level interventions. The following are the major tools adopted to sensitise the city stakeholders:



The efforts undertaken were aligned to meet the Outcome 1 of the project. It also led to the identification of champions of disability inclusion in the city that would build public awareness around disability inclusion and inclusive design. Thus, if further required can aid involvement of Persons with Disabilities to understand their perceptions and the diverse grass-root level challenges. This will be instrumental in providing an atmosphere for Persons with Disabilities to live independently in an urban environment.

6.2. Beneficiaries of the City's Inclusive Efforts

The programme intended to improve the overall quality and standard of living of the users especially Persons with Disabilities, women, children and elderly in the city of Varanasi. The relevant tasks/activities undertaken were aligned to meet the Outcome 2 and 4 of the programme. This also involved developing knowledge resources and training materials to support the public, private sector and grass-root level organizations to adhere and comply with the Accessibility Act.

The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities with the Government of Uttar Pradesh has undertaken several initiatives to promote the overall development and upliftment of the socio-economic condition of persons with disabilities. These remarkable efforts of the state, district and city level administration in ensuring smooth operation of welfare aids/schemes have played an important role in the socio-economic upliftment of Persons with Disabilities.

Under the Accessible India Campaign, there have been tremendous efforts made to solve the issues of inaccessible urban environments. Few government and public buildings have integrated barrier-free infrastructure e.g., ramps, lifts, tactile paving, accessible digital information, etc.

Figure 9: Uttar Pradesh wins the National Award of Excellence for Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities



In lieu of the India Smart Cities Mission, VSCL had taken numerous initiatives with an objective to create accessible, inclusive and sustainable infrastructure. Few of them could be named as Smart School at Machodari, Inclusive Park in the town hall area, etc. The projects had been designed keeping in mind the special needs of persons with disabilities and integrated with infrastructure based on universal design principles such as ramps, accessible toilets, tactile paving, etc.

Figure 10: Smart School, Machodhari



More recently, as a part of the bilateral relationship with Japan, the Rudraksha International Cooperation and convention centre was built in Varanasi. It is estimated that over INR 200 crores of investment was leveraged in the creation of this universally accessible infrastructure.

Figure 11: Rudraksha International Cooperation and convention centre



TASU had also documented the inclusive efforts of VSCL. The case study document highlighted few of the completed and proposed projects in the city which aimed to create an inclusive urban environment for all. The document also includes recommendations for universal design features which could be relevant for the city stakeholders to plan, design, implement and monitor such infrastructure in adherence/compliance with the necessary standards/norms. The list would act as a checklist to integrate the elements of universal design features for conceptualising and designing the similar interventions. (Please refer to the link for the case study details: <https://niua.org/intranet/sites/default/files/1552.pdf>).

This would lead to the overall improvement in the city environment and provide quality of life for its citizens. Recently, the Prime Minister of India, Shri. Narendra Modi inaugurated various development projects worth more than INR 1,500 crore during his visit to Varanasi. Few of the city projects in pipeline could be highlighted as follows:

Figure 12: Projects in Pipeline



Snapshots of Inclusive efforts in the city:

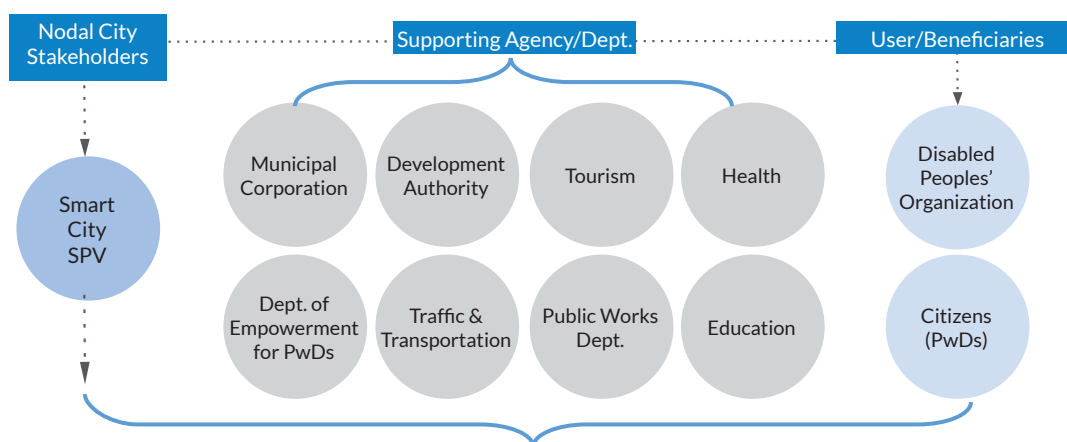


6.3. Partnership

The collaborative and participatory approach had been crucial for effective and efficient delivery of inclusive planning and design processes. Involvement of DPOs, communities and citizens would be crucial at the planning and designing level for creating inclusive interventions, while at the same time, emphasising on collaborative and shared learning from each other will be instrumental in mainstreaming the topic of “Inclusion” within the urban development agenda of the city. The efforts were also to align and fulfill the Outcome 3 of the programme.

The following are the major city stakeholders which had played a vital role in city engagement and partnership process:

Figure 13: City Stakeholders Involved



6.4. Policy Interventions

As a programme mandate of mainstreaming the dialogue on disability inclusion in India, NIUA had partnered with Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee and Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur. to revise and unify the existing standards (Harmonised Guidelines and Urban & Regional Development Plan Formulation Guidelines) pertaining to universal access and inclusive design in India. In support from NIUA, the eminent academic institutes have conducted numerous consultative and participatory workshops involving a diverse group of stakeholders for the revision process. The IITs had conducted a hand holding session with 12 cities for adoption and implementation of the standards/guidelines for city level. A national level workshop would also be conducted in participation with around 15 cities (including commissioner, city officials, DPOs, etc.) to disseminate the information about the process adopted for revising the guidelines and devising an action plan to integrate the key universal design features within the state and city bye-laws. The efforts also met the Outcome 1 and 4 of the programme.

6.5. Training & Capacity Building

NIUA and AIILSG had connected with over 30 cities for a detailed training-needs-assessment exercise and developed training modules on disability inclusion. The modules have been made available on the National Urban Learning Platform as a short-term certification-based course. TASU had also hand held around 100 city stakeholders (including city officials, DPOs/NGOS, academia, urban practitioners, etc.,) for participating in certification-based training programmes. In Varanasi, around 15 officials had participated in the first orientation session to the self-paced certification course. This is also directly in alignment to meet the Outcome 4 of the programme.

6.6. Outreach and Dissemination

The city engagement was based on a participatory model where Disabled Peoples' Organisation and persons with disabilities had been actively involved in the workshops, policy, advocacy and research related activities. The activities had assisted in building awareness and sensitization about the barriers and challenges associated with disability, and also, towards advocating the need for bringing policy level interventions.

To achieve the Outcome 1 and 4 of the programme, TASU's approach for outreach and dissemination would be broadly categorised into three levels of engagement - physical outreach, digital media and print.

- **Physical Outreach**

Several workshops, participatory exercises, focussed group discussions/discussions with the city stakeholders and consultations have been very pertinent in building the narrative of disability inclusion in Varanasi. These activities have assisted in understanding the grass-root issues associated with disability through involvement of DPOs and communities at large. Around 50 such outreach events were conducted in Varanasi within the project timeline.

- **Social/Digital media**

These forms of engagement have been quite effective to reach out to a larger audience especially during the peak of the pandemic. These include, conducting webinars, blogs, discussion on online platforms, lecture series, etc. to create an awareness amongst the stakeholders on pertinent issues concerning disability. Social platforms like Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Facebook, etc. have been used to engage with a larger audience. Another important activity under the digital intervention has been the launch of the 'self-paced learning programmes' for the city officials, urban practitioners, etc. These learning modules have been uploaded to the National Urban Learning Platform of NIUA.

- **Print media**

For all relevant milestones/deliverables, the hard copies have been disseminated across smart cities and global/national partners. TASU also utilised the print media outlets for the purpose of disseminating the key insights from consultations/workshops to a larger audience. Few of the renowned print media agencies include, 'The Times of India', 'Hindustan Times', 'PIB', etc. Additionally, NIUA's own weekly newsletter regularly covers the inclusive efforts made under the BASIIC programme. The newsletters are sent across to, and read by the NIUA's staff, officials at the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, ULBs across the country and the global/national partners.

Public awareness campaigns also assisted in improving the understanding about accessibility, information about human rights, accessibility standards and barriers associated with participation. There is a need to upscale the sensitisation and awareness efforts about inclusive infrastructure and the related technicalities amongst the decision makers for prioritising and emphasising its implementation at city level.

6.7. Knowledge Products

TASU has undertaken numerous research initiatives during the course of the programme, The research documents have a key focus on understanding disability inclusion specific to Varanasi. The below list indicates the details of the knowledge products:

- **Cities Insights Report**

It highlights the existing urbanization trend which somehow lacks in creating provisions for Persons with Disabilities including elderly persons, children and women. It bestows the economic and social case of urban inequity by mapping the global and national strategies adopted to plan/design cities with provision for universal access to urban services and infrastructure while bridging the urban development divide. The report was launched by MoHUA on 30th June 2021.

- **Insights from Co-design Workshop**

The report captures the key findings of the workshop. It highlights the experiences and everyday life of persons with disabilities living in Varanasi by engaging them in participatory design activities. Additionally, it maps innovative ideas in improving the city from the perspective of accessibility, inclusivity and safety aspects. The report is available on the given link: <https://www.niua.org/intranet/sites/default/files/1189.pdf>

- **Urban Statistics Report**

It captures data and analytics associated with persons with disabilities at national, state and city level. The document would act as a ready reckoner to address the spatial, socio-economic, digital and attitudinal barriers associated with disabilities in Indian Cities. The report was launched by MoHUA on 30th June 2021.

- **City Audit Assessment Report**

The report captures the existing city infrastructure and services from the perspective of disability inclusion while measuring its compliance with the disability inclusion standards/norms. The key findings reflect the social, economic and spatial characteristics of the urban environment that support and improve the quality of life of Persons with Disabilities (including children, women and elderly persons). The findings have been used to develop a set of recommendations to improve access to the city infrastructure and services from the perspective of accessibility, inclusivity and safety. It is currently at the design stage and under review.

- **Case Study Documentation on Inclusive & Accessible Varanasi**

This document maps the inclusive efforts of VSCL. It highlights few of the completed and proposed projects in the city which aims to create an inclusive urban environment for all. It also includes recommendations for universal design features which could be relevant for the city stakeholders and to plan, design, implement and monitor such infrastructure in adherence/compliance with the necessary standards/norms. The report is available on the given link: <https://niua.org/intranet/sites/default/files/1552.pdf>

- **Audit Toolkit**

The toolkit would provide a comprehensive framework and a methodological approach to measure the performance of the existing city level services and infrastructure with respect to accessibility, safety and inclusivity aspects. It would facilitate the city stakeholders to determine and address the barriers faced by Persons with Disabilities in an urban environment. The outcomes and key findings would further lead to the redefining of the policy/project initiatives that focus on participatory and data driven approach in accordance with the inclusive forms of urban management, planning and design. The toolkit is currently at the finalisation stage.

- **Policy Brief on Inclusive Vaccination Strategy**

TASU has conducted in-depth consultation with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to understand the interlinked issues and devise strategy towards making the COVID-19 vaccination process accessible, affordable and inclusive for persons with disabilities. The policy brief highlights the major issues and challenges faced by persons with disabilities in availing the vaccination process and suggesting recommendations for its adoption and implementation by relevant stakeholders. It is currently at the design stage.

- **Pandemic Resilient Urban Plan for Varanasi**

The research paper focuses on assessing the current impact of the pandemic on the vulnerable sections of our society, mapping the city level initiatives and recommendations for the cities to be more resilient, inclusive and sustainable for future growth. The paper is being written in collaboration with IIT KGP and is at the publication stage.

Figure 14: List of Published Research Documents



6.8. Collaterals

Several collaterals have been developed in collaboration with Leewardists. The collaterals have played a crucial role to spread awareness about various facets associated with disabilities. The list could be highlighted as follows:

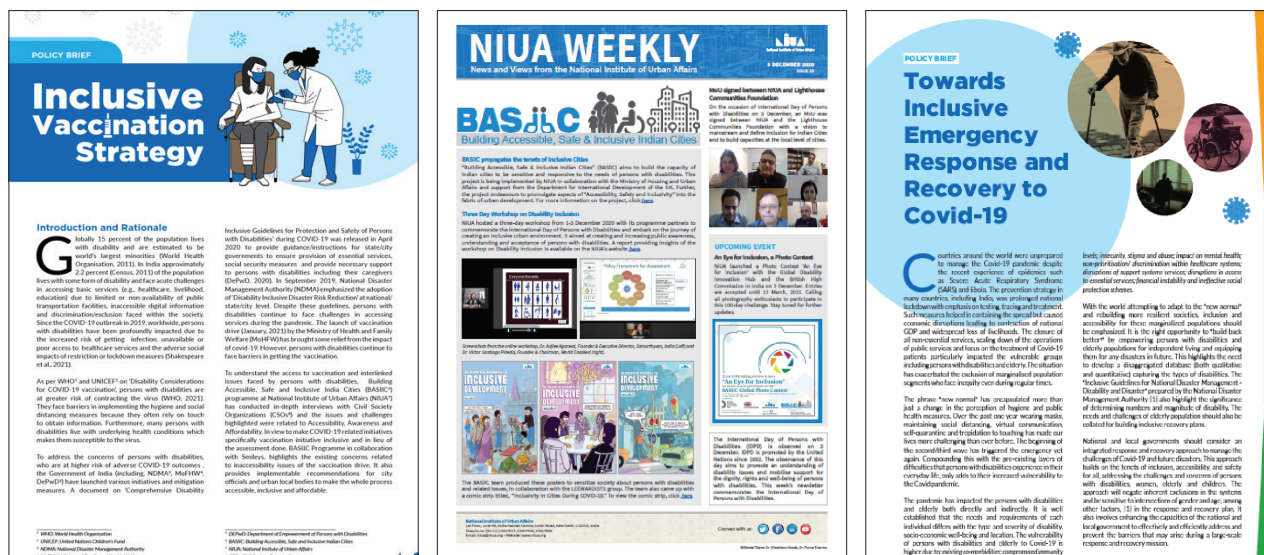
- A-Z of disability inclusion comic
- Posters on removing barriers against persons with disabilities
- Comic on 'Inclusive City'
- 'Inclusive City' game
- Comic on 'COVID vaccination process

Apart from the above, several policy briefs, newsletters, several blogs, articles focussing on understating disability aspects of Varanasi have been developed.

Figure 15: List of Published Collaterals



Figure 16: List of Published newsletters/policy briefs



7. Impact of the Programme

- No. of city officials engaged interacted – 20
- No. of Persons with Disabilities involved directly - 50
- No. of DPOs involved - 2
- No. of workshops conducted – 2
- No. of interviews conducted – 30
- No. of collaterals developed - 5
- No. of knowledge products developed - 8
- No. of city officials trained - 15
- No. of inclusive project beneficiaries in the city - 13

8. Limitations/Issues and Challenges Faced

Following limitations were identified during the course of city engagement:

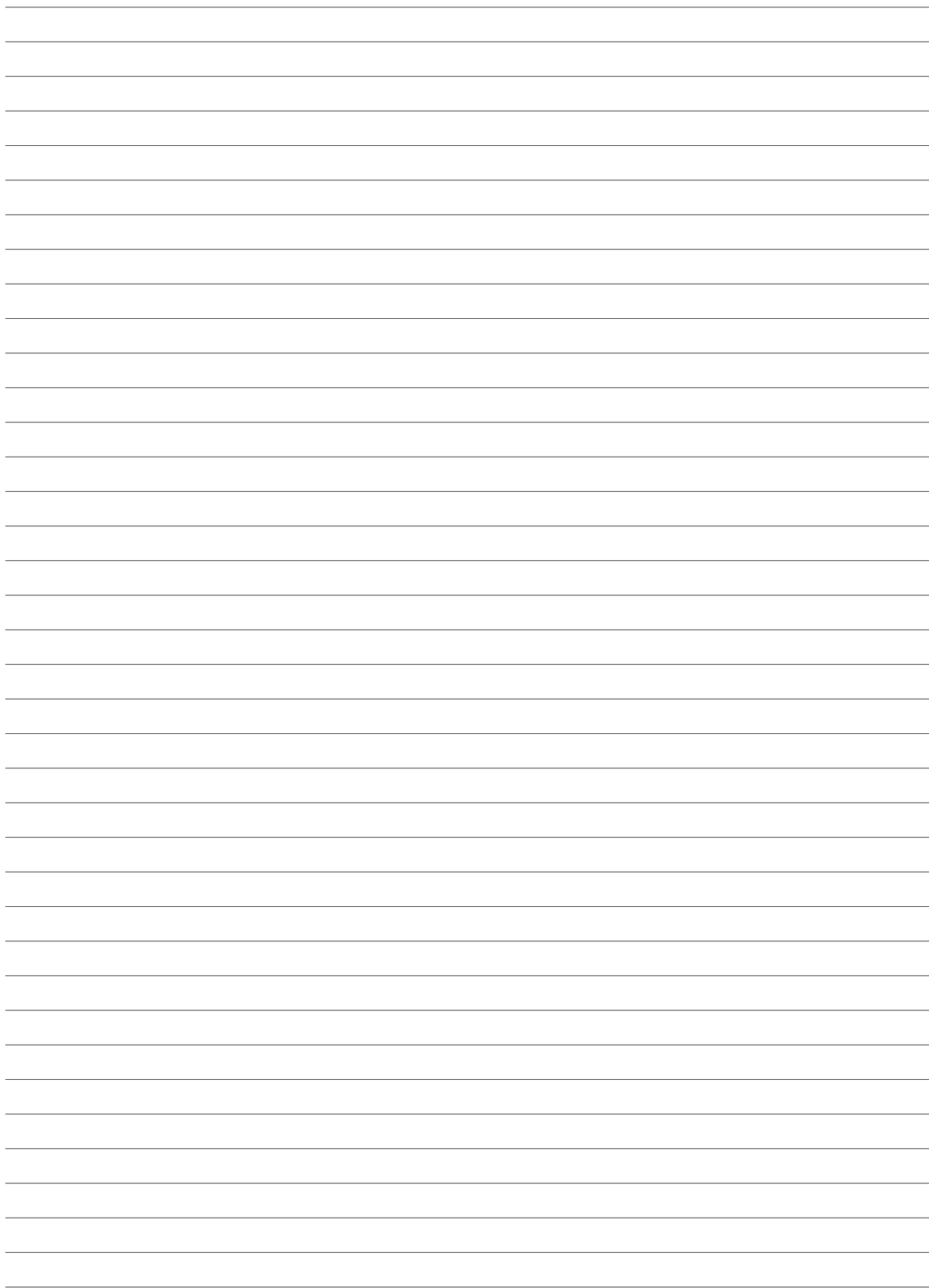
- Diversified nature, roles, and responsibilities of the government bodies.
- Lack of understanding of the grass-root level issues associated with disability inclusion.
- Lack of sensitisation and awareness about the challenges faced by Persons with Disabilities in an urban environment.
- Lack of technical knowledge on universal design/barrier free design principles.
- Understanding of spatial, socio-economic, digital and attitudinal/behavioural barriers associated with disability.
- Lack of adherence to the mandates highlighted in RPwD Act, 2016.
- Non-compliance with the existing guidelines and standards related to the implementation of universal design/barrier free design principles within the urban infrastructure.
- Restriction in travelling to the city due to Covid-19 restrictions and imposition of lockdown.
- Lack of primary data due to non-availability of the city officials for consultation/interaction.
- Non-availability of city level/ward level data base on various aspects of disabled population including demographic profile, socio-economic structure, access to basic services and infrastructure.
- Non-availability of mapped secondary data/city level information on city's efforts towards disability inclusion.
- Lack of coordinated efforts of city stakeholders leading to restrain in collecting information on sector-wise efforts towards disability inclusion.
- Due to the limitation of the objectives under the BASIIC programme, the research deliberately focused on understanding the accessibility and inclusion aspects of an urban environment. However, from a wider perspective, inclusion also takes into consideration the targeted beneficiaries irrespective of age, ability, gender, socio-economic status, etc.

9. Upscaling Strategy

As a next step to disseminate the learnings across other cities and partners, the key learnings will be shared with both international and local partners through a range of outreach activities including direct engagement of stakeholders and identifying key actions areas for research and implementation. This would also aim to assist the 100 smart cities in replicating the initiatives at a pilot or on a pan-city level and mainstreaming the narrative of disability inclusion based on the policy, peoples and practice approach. The support from TASU has been well appreciated by the partner city and the nodal ministry i.e. MoHUA. Key stakeholders including Smart City SPV and Municipal Corporation have shown intent to extend their existing collaboration with NIUA on mainstreaming disability inclusion. The following activities have been planned to sustain and scale the efforts:

- **Policy advisory** – Revision of HG and URDPFI guidelines will be followed by adoption and implementation at the city level. This will necessitate focussed advocacy efforts and technical assistance to cities in contextualizing these guidelines in the urban development projects. Moreover, working with the central ministries to create a roadmap for achieving the vision of 'Cities for All'. This would include revitalising the National Action Plan of 2012 and emphasis on the new Disability Policy of 2021.

- **Training and Capacity Development** – On the approach adopted, development of training modules would be undertaken to ease the adoption and understanding of these guidelines. Leveraging partnerships developed during BASIIC would be another approach towards creating an evolving body of knowledge on disability inclusion.
- **Advocacy Efforts** – At the national level, reputed agencies/stakeholders responsible for development of design codes/standards would be approached to inculcate universal design principles. Policy makers and key bi/multilateral agencies would be looped in to prioritize the work on disability.
- **Outreach Strategy** – TASU will be proactively harnessing the power of social media and digital platforms to create engagement opportunities for diverse stakeholder groups.
- **City Specific strategy** – In consultation with various local stakeholders, TASU has identified activities to sustain and scale the efforts on disability inclusion. These would include the following:
 - Launch of City Audit Assessment Report (of BASIIC) and the Case Study Report (of GDI Hub) in November 21.
 - Research initiatives to create an accessible city strategy for ‘Sugamya Varanasi’ in collaboration with GDIH, NIUA and VSCL.
 - Partnership with ESRI to augment the Kashi Geo Hub to include spatial data on accessibility in the city. The partnership will also develop story maps, opinion surveys, and pan-city challenges focussed on disability inclusion.
 - TA for initiatives focused on creating inclusive and accessible urban environments, including support to ongoing initiatives under the technical assistance component of BASIIC program.
 - Support VDA for DPR formulation of Ropeway Project, a first of its kind effort of implementing a ropeway system as a public transport system.
 - Support DEPWD for implementing 25 accessible public toilets in Varanasi.
 - Support VSCL and Tourism Department for revamping the Ghats (Asi and Raj Ghat).
 - Replication of city audit exercise at project/site or pan-city level.
 - Dissemination of audit toolkit with 100 smart cities.





UK Government

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National Institute of Urban Affairs


Established in 1976, National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) was tasked to bridge the gap between research and practice on issues related to urbanization, and suggest ways and mechanisms to address these urban challenges of the country. For more than 40 years now, NIUA has been the vanguard for contributing to, and at times, building the urban narrative for a fast-evolving urban India. The Institution has been actively working towards bringing forth key areas of concern for urban India in order to build the urban discourse at various scales.

It has utilized its competencies in research, knowledge management, policy advocacy and capacity building to address the urban challenges, and continuously strive to develop sustainable, inclusive, and productive urban ecosystems in India. It has emerged as a thought leader and knowledge hub for urban development in India, and is sought out by both Indian and International organizations for collaborations and partnerships for India's urban transforming journey. NIUA is committed towards aligning its efforts towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through all its initiatives and programs.

Empower through inclusivity

#BASIIC_NIUA
#inclusionmatters
#AccessibleCities
#InclusiveCities
#CitiesforAll
#EmpowerthroughInclusivity

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