

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL JUSTICE AND
EMPOWERMENT (2020-2021)**

(SEVENTEENTH LOK SABHA)

**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT
(DEPARTMENT OF EMPOWERMENT PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES)**

**ASSESSMENT OF SCHEME FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RIGHTS OF
PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES ACT, 2016 (SIPDA).**

TWENTY-THIRD REPORT



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI**

August, 2021/ Sravana, 1943 (Saka)

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Presented to Lok Sabha on 06.08.2021

Laid in Rajya Sabha on 06.08.2021



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI**

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**COMPOSITION OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL
JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (2020-21)**

SMT. RAMA DEVI - CHAIRPERSON

MEMBERS

Lok Sabha

2. Smt. Sangeeta Azad
3. Shri Bholanath 'B.P. Saroj'
4. Smt. Pramila Bisoyi
5. Shri Thomas Chazhikadan
6. Shri Chhatar Singh Darbar
7. Shri Y. Devendrappa
8. Smt. Maneka Sanjay Gandhi
9. Shri Hans Raj Hans
10. Shri Abdul Khaleque
11. Smt. Ranjeeta Koli
12. Smt. Geeta Kora
13. Shri Vijay Kumar
14. Shri Akshaibar Lal
15. Shri V. Srinivas Prasad
16. Shri Arjun Singh
17. Smt. Supriya Sule
18. Shri K. Shanmuga Sundaram
19. Smt. Rekha Arun Verma
20. Shri Tokheho Yepthomi
21. Vacant #

Rajya Sabha

22. Smt. Jharna Das Baidya
23. Smt. Ramilaben Bara
24. Shri Abir Ranjan Biswas
25. Shri N.Chandrasegharan
26. Smt. Geeta *alias* Chandraprabha*
27. Smt. Mamata Mohanta
28. Shri Narayan Koragappa*
29. Shri Ram Nath Thakur
30. Shri Ramkumar Verma
31. Shri Ramji*

* Nominated to the Committee *w.e.f.* 23.12.2020

Shri Pashupati Kumar Paras ceased to be Member of the Committee *w.e.f.* 07.07.2021 consequent upon his appointment as Union Minister.

LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT

1. Smt. Anita B. Panda - Joint Secretary
2. Smt. Mamta Kemwal - Director
3. Shri Krishendra Kumar - Deputy Secretary
4. Shri Kamal Khurana - Executive Officer

INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairperson, Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment (2020-21) having been authorized by the Committee to submit the Report on their behalf, do present this Twenty-third Report on 'Assessment of Scheme for Implementation of Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (SIPDA)' relating to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities).

2. The Committee took oral evidence of the representatives of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities) on 8th April, 2021. The observations and recommendations of the Committee are based on the evidence of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities).

3. The Report was considered and adopted by the Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment at their sitting held on 5th August, 2021.

4. The Committee wish to express their thanks to the Officers of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities) for furnishing the written replies and other material/information and also for appearing before the Committee to tender their evidence in connection with the examination of the subject.

5. For facility of reference, observations/recommendations have been printed in thick type in the body of this Report.

NEW DELHI;

05 August, 2021
14 Shravana, 1943 (Saka)

RAMA DEVI
Chairperson,
Standing Committee on
Social Justice and
Empowerment

REPORT

CHAPTER- I

ASSESSMENT OF SCHEME FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES ACT, 2016 (SIPDA)

INTRODUCTRY

1.1 The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Referred to as DEPwD or Department) has been implementing a Central Sector Scheme, the Scheme for Implementation of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (SIPDA), an umbrella scheme having 13 sub-schemes to provide financial assistance for undertaking various activities outlined in the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016. The Act endorses the rights of Persons with Disabilities for access to education, vocational training, employment, public transport, built-up environment, information and communication ecosystems and upholds their independence and dignity. However the scheme is not new per se. The Ministry has been releasing funds under the Scheme since 1999 for the implementation of the provisions of the erstwhile Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995. The formulation of the renewed Scheme was approved by the competent authority in the Standing Finance Committee (SFC) on 4.1.2016 which is effective from 28.1.2016. The Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC) in its meeting held on 25.09.2017 approved for continuation of the scheme.

1.2. At present SIPDA has thirteen components, added gradually. In 2018-19, there were six components, namely; (i) Creation of Barrier Free Environment (ii) Accessible India Campaign (iii) National Action Plan for Skill Development for PwDs (iv) Composite Regional Centres (CRCs) (v) District Disability Rehabilitation Centre(DDRCs) (vi) Unique Disability Identification (UDID). Four more components viz., (i) Awareness Generation and Publicity (AGP) (ii) Research on Disability Related

Technology, Product and Issues (iii) In-service Training (iv) Incentive to Employees were added in 2019-20. In 2020-21, four independent miscellaneous schemes *i.e.*, Deaf Colleges, Media, State Spinal Injury Centre and Braille Press were merged with the SIPDA whereas two components namely District Disability Rehabilitation Centre (DDRCs) and Composite Regional Centres (CRCs) were removed in 2019-2020. In 2021-22, Indian Spinal Injury Centre was also brought under SIPDA.

1.3. According to the Department, SIPDA envisages the following activities:

- (i) To provide barrier free environment for the persons with disabilities (PwDs) which includes access to built environment in schools, colleges, academic and training institutions, offices and public buildings, recreational areas, health centres/hospitals etc. This would include provision for ramps, rails, lifts, accessible toilets for wheelchair users, Braille signage and auditory signals, tactile flooring, slopes in pavements for the easy access of wheelchair users, engraving on the surface of zebra crossing for the blind or for persons with low vision, engraving on the edges of railway platforms for the blind or for low vision and devising appropriate symbols of disability, etc.
- (ii) To make Government websites at the Centre/State and District levels accessible to PwDs as per the guidelines for Indian Government website issued by NIC and Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, Government of India.
- (iii) Skill Development Programme for PwDs.
- (iv) To enhance the accessibility of built environment, transport system and information and communication eco-system, the Department has conceptualized the “Accessible India Campaign (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan)” as a nation-wide flagship campaign for achieving universal accessibility that will enable persons with disabilities to gain access to equal opportunity and live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life in an inclusive society. The campaign will include conduct of accessibility audits and making the public places / infrastructure fully accessible in built-up environment, transportation and ICT eco-system.

- (v) To assist State Governments to organize camps for issuance of disability certificates and Universal Disability ID Card (UDID).
- (vi) To create awareness campaign and sensitization programs for various stakeholders.
- (vii) To set up/support resource Centres facilitating dissemination of information on disability issues, counseling and providing support services.
- (viii) To promote accessibility of libraries, both physical and digital, and other knowledge Centres.
- (ix) To promote research and development activities in the field of disability rehabilitation.
- (x) To establish early diagnostic and intervention Centres at District Headquarters/other places that have Government Medical Colleges, with a view to helping hearing impaired infants and young children to acquire necessary skills to get prepared for regular schooling.
- (xi) One time grant to the State Governments/UTs for the Offices of State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities for infrastructure facilities.
- (xii) Construction of special recreation centres/development of parks for PwDs where the appropriate Governments/local authorities have their own land and providing barrier-free standards in existing parks and other urban infrastructure.
- (xiii) Support for sporting events at National/State level.
- (xiv) Support to meet the expenditure relating to engagement of Consultant for preparation of Detailed Project Report (DPR) required for formulation of new schemes/projects.
- (xv) In service training and sensitization of key functionaries of Central/State Governments, local bodies and other service providers.
- (xvi) Incentive to employers in the private sector for providing employment to persons with disabilities.

- (xvii) Financial assistance for any other activity specified in the Act for which financial assistance is not being provided/covered by the existing Schemes of the Department.

CHAPTER-II

BUDGETARY ESTIMATES AND EXPENDITURE

2.1 As per the information submitted to the Committee by the Department, the Budgetary/Revised Estimates and Actual Expenditure for the preceding five years and Budget estimates for current year under the Scheme are as follows:

(₹ in crore)

Year	BE	RE	Actual Expenditure
2016-17	193.00	193.00	186.83
2017-18	207.00	257.00	272.23
2018-19	300.00	258.00	260.82
2019-20	315.00	260.00	217.34
2020-21	251.50	122.89	103.43
2021-22	209.77	-	-

2.2. In view of the substantial decline in Revised estimates and expenditure, the Department on being enquired by the Committee about the reasons for downsizing the Revised Estimates for 2019-20 and 2020-21 and Budgetary Estimates for 2021-22, *inter-alia* submitted in their written reply that:

“In the beginning of F.Y. 2019-20, the SIPDA Budget was ₹ 315.00 crore and the budget was scaled down in RE ₹ 260.00 crore in view of reduction in Department’s budget at RE stage. SIPDA being an umbrella scheme with ten components had to be downsized by ₹ 55.00 crore after anticipating that major component of SIPDA schemes have not received adequate proposals to meet the expenditure upto the level of Budget Estimate (BE) of SIPDA scheme. This was mainly related to the National Action Plan for skill development which was under review for course correction as well. At the end of 2019-20, an amount of ₹ 217.34 crore as 83.59% of the RE could be utilized under SIPDA.

One of the major reason for significant difference between allocation of FY 2019-20 and FY 2020-21 is due to CRC and DDRCs coming out of SIPDA scheme. CRCs had major allocations earlier of ₹70 crore which was included with National Institutes w.e.f. FY 2020-21.”

2.3 With reference to shortfall in expenditure, the Department *inter-alia* explained to the Committee, the following reasons in their written reply:-

(a) **Creation of Barrier Free Environment other than AIC:-** Under this component of SIPDA, the budgetary allocation was downsized only in 2020-21 at the Revised Estimates (RE) stage as less number of proposals were expected to be received due to the prevailing situation of COVID-19 pandemic. However, despite that the efforts were made consistently and the Barrier Free component has effectively utilized the funds against allocated budget during last 03 years that were more than the proportionate Budget Estimates.

(₹ in crore)								
2018-19			2019-20			2020-21		
BE	RE	Fund released	BE	RE	Fund released	BE	RE	Fund released
6.00	10.00	15.55	13.00	19.60	15.55	18.00	16.00	25.22

(b) **Accessible India Campaign:-** For AIC there has been no downsizing of the budgetary allocation in the years 2018-19 and 2019-20. Actual Expenditure even crossed the notional RE allocation, for the component of AIC under SIPDA. In 2019-20, against an initial proportional allocation of ₹ 105.00 crore, ₹ 134.19 crore were released to States/UTs. However, due to COVID pandemic there was slowdown in the construction activity and hence, the response from States/UTs in submission of Utilization Certificates and Cost Estimates witnessed a consequential slow down during the first three quarters of the FY 2020-21. Thus, the RE for the current financial year was reduced to ₹ 56.37 crore from the BE of ₹ 105 crore. ₹ 54.03 crore were released under this Campaign during FY 2020-21.

(c) **National Action Plan for Skill Training:-**In so far as FY 2021-22 is concerned, a Budgetary Estimate of ₹ 80.85 crore has been affixed which has not seen a downward revision as of now. During the year 2019-20, NAP underwent a rigorous overhaul in the process as well as introduction of several monitoring mechanisms. Furthermore, in the current financial year the COVID-19 pandemic has severely affected the skill training of persons with disabilities. Due to the outbreak of the pandemic, training commenced by some ETPs of the Department in March 2020 could not be completed, whereas some other ETPs which had planned to commence the training could not even start it. Training activities were not allowed till September 21, 2020. Thereafter, though training activities had been allowed, it was permitted in Non-containment zones only and that also as per Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) requiring maintenance of proper social and physical distancing. This has reduced the overall capacity of training centres by almost half of the normal capacity.

(d) Braille press:-All proposals for release of financial assistance under Braille Press scheme are routed to the Department through National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Visual Disabilities (NIEPVD), Dehradun which is the Nodal Agency for implementation of the Scheme. Further the funds are released to any agency/Institution through NIEPVD only. There was a reduction in Actual Expenditure since there was less number of proposals received in 2019-20. Further, some proposals could not be processed for want of additional documentation. In 2020-21, there was an increase in RE as well as actual expenditure as compared to the previous year.

(e) Under other various small component of the SIPDA, the budgetary allocation in the last 02 years has been reduced due to insufficient number of proposals for financial assistance under the Scheme.

2.4 Elaborating the strategy adopted by the Department to promote the sub-schemes under SIPDA so that the objective of the scheme is achieved, short fall in the expenditure against them is minimized and a realistic BE is prepared, the Department submitted in their written reply that:

“SIPDA is an umbrella Central Sector Scheme, under which various sub schemes exist with view to ensure convergence of resources across schemes with same or related objectives and similar set of targeted beneficiaries. Every sub-scheme of SIPDA has a separate Program Division and separate guidelines. The Program Division of each sub-scheme adopts the strategy to promote their sub scheme for their stakeholders and implementing agencies (IAs). Publicity of scheme is done through social media, website, meeting with States/ UTs and Implementing agencies, VCs etc. Further, check lists have been circulated to the IAs about the proper submission of proposals.”

2.5 When asked about the mechanism available with the Department to assess the outcome of each of the sub-schemes in the absence of specific allocation as single allocation may adversely affect some of the sub-schemes, the representative of the Department during the course of evidence informed the Committee that:

“हम लोग एक नेशनल एलोकेशन तैयार करते हैं, जिसे सिपडा के प्रोग्राम डिवीजन को देते हैं। वह इन सभी को कम्पाइल करता है और उसके रिव्यू के बाद ही हमारा बजट डिवीजन एक फीगर को एड करते हैं। इस पर काफी रिव्यू होता है कि यह आएंगी की नहीं आएंगी, Because we have to answer if we do not reach the final figure. तभी सिपडा में पहले हमारा बजट में सभी स्कीम में सौ प्रतिशत खर्च हुआ है, लेकिन छोटी स्कीम में नहीं हो रहा था तभी इसे कल्ब करने की जरूरत पड़ी।“

2.6 The Department further clarified in their post evidence reply that:

“SIPDA is Central Sector Scheme, hence it has to be dependent on States/UTs and IAs to receive proposals properly for processing the proposal and releasing the Grants. Notional allocations are made each year for the sub schemes as per the projected demand and the Budgetary Grants received under SIPDA. Each sub scheme has their own physical and financial targets on the basis of which the assessment of each sub scheme is done. The single allocation of all Sub schemes helps as SIPDA being a Central sector Umbrella scheme, it has the advantage of optimum utilisation of funds as if there is shortfall of proposals in one component of the scheme then the same can be covered by the another components where there is adequate proposals.

In the year 2021-22, the notional allocation has been made in each subscheme of the umbrella scheme SIPDA. This is an essential indicator to monitor the financial progress of the scheme. The notional allocation in each sub-scheme of SIPDA is as under:

(₹ in crore)		
Sl. No.	Activities	BE (Notional Allocation)- 2021-22
1.	Creation of barrier free environment under the SIPDA Scheme, other than AIC	9.32
2.	Accessible India Campaign	80.00
3.	National Action Plan for Skill Development for PwDs	80.85
4.	Unique Disability Identification (UDID)	9.00
5.	Awareness Generation and Publicity (AGP)	2.50
6.	Research on Disability Related Technology, Product and Issues Scheme	1.00
7.	In-service Training	2.00
8.	Incentive to Private Employers	0.10
9.	Deaf College	3.00
10.	Media	7.00
11.	State Spinal Injury Centre	5.00
12.	Braille Press	6.00
13.	Indian Spinal Injury Centre	4.00
	Total	209.77

Further as per the guidelines of Ministry of Finance, Department of Expenditure, the financial outlay of each standalone Central Sector scheme should not be less than ₹50 crore for five year plan period.”

2.7 On being enquired whether the proposal for merging these Schemes under

SIPDA was placed before the Central Advisory Board, an apex policy recommending body on disability matters, the Department submitted in their post evidence written reply that:

“In Scheme related matters as per current delegation, the Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC) is competent to sanction the changes in continuing schemes. As per guidelines of MoF, DoE, the proposal for continuation of schemes with estimated total financial outlay of more than ₹ 500 crores and upto ₹ 1000 crore, during plan period is appraised by EFC chaired by Expenditure Secretary and approved by Minister in Charge and Finance Minister.”

2.8 The Committee find that the Department of Empowerment of Pwds, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, has been releasing funds since 1999 under an Umbrella Scheme for the implementation of the provisions of the erstwhile Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995, called 'SIPDA', in various fields like access to education and vocational training, employment, public transport, built-up environment and information and communication systems so as to uphold the independence and dignity of Pwds. Various sub-schemes or components under SIPDA have been added/removed in 2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22 after the enactment of the Rights of Persons with Disability Act, 2016. In 2018-19, the Scheme had six components and now in 2021-22, it has 13 components. The Committee are surprised to note that the Scheme, when it had six components in 2016-17, had budgetary allocation of ₹ 193 crore and in 2021-22, when its components have more than doubled, the budgetary allocation is ₹ 209.77 Crore, a mere ₹ 16.77 crore more. The Committee lament the fact that the Budget for SIPDA, which should have been at least doubled in a span of 5 years in order to achieve the objectives envisaged under the added subschemes/components, has remained almost stagnant. Furthermore, the expenditure status of the Scheme is alarming to the Committee as they find that the pace of expenditure during the year 2016-17 onwards has not increased despite expansion in the scope of the Schemes during the period, rather the expenditure has nose-dived in 2019-20 to 2020-21, which, as per the Department, has happened mainly due to COVID-19 pandemic. The Committee feel that holding COVID-19 responsible for it is not

justified as the Department has themselves also stated reasons like pendency of UCs, lack of proposals under NAP for skill development as well as Braille Press sub-scheme, etc. for reduction in actual expenditure. The Department should have analysed the reasons for insufficient number of proposals under these sub-schemes and promoted the same in the interest of persons with disabilities. The Committee also feel that adding & removing sub-schemes in an umbrella scheme has its pitfalls. If the Department had exhaustively examined the scope of SIPDA at the time of revision of the Scheme in 2016-2017, there perhaps would not have been any need to add or remove the Schemes in subsequent years. The Committee, further, are of the view that the need for poorly performing components like Braille press, Research on disability Technology etc. should have been pre-examined and decisions taken accordingly, particularly for research which is generally undertaken by outside institutions like DRDO. They are of the opinion that SIPDA has been amended every now and then which has affected not only beneficiaries but also made it difficult for Implementing agencies and other stakeholders to understand the new processes, guidelines and provisions of this frequently reworked Scheme for proper implementation.

2.9 With regard to the mechanism for allocating funds under SIPDA, the Committee are informed by the Department that the Scheme get a single allocation and notional allocation is made for each of the sub-schemes each year so that there is optimum utilization of funds. It has further been informed that if there is shortfall of proposals on one component of the Scheme then the same can be covered by other components, where there are adequate proposals. From this, it appears that in case if any of the sub-scheme is

lagging behind, then no extra effort would, perhaps, be made to promote that particular sub-scheme and the funds will be diverted to another more popular sub-Scheme under SIPDA. Hence, the main thrust of the Department seems to be on spending the full allocation, even if it is at the expense of a less popular sub-scheme. The Committee feel that this trend would dilute the objectives of the Scheme, as all the sub-Schemes, once included, will have different roles to play for the empowerment of PwDs and the optimum benefits of SIPDA would be achieved, if all the sub-schemes successfully perform together. Moreover all the sub components have their own program Divisions and guidelines. Hence, the Committee recommend the Department to re-examine the decision of having a single allocation *vis-a-vis* separate allocation under each sub-Scheme, in consultation with stakeholders so that objectives of SIPDA are better achieved with better fiscal management and monitoring.

2.10 The Committee are surprised to note that the Central Advisory Board(CAB), an apex policy recommending body in disability matters was not taken into confidence before the merger/de-merger of sub-schemes under SIPDA as it has been informed to them by the Department that the Expenditure Finance Committee is competent to sanction the changes in Schemes. Notwithstanding the expertise and mandate of the Expenditure Finance Committee, the Committee opine that the role of Central Advisory Board should not have been overlooked, particularly when the members of the CAB are experts in the field of disability and rehabilitation, directly interacting with the stakeholders and are responsible for the performance of the Scheme. The Committee, therefore, feel that the Central Advisory Board should be involved to play a proactive role in major policy decisions on SIPDA and the

Department should seek their advice on the various aspects of Scheme on the basis of functional experience gained by them.

CHAPTER-III

CREATION OF BARRIER FREE ENVIRONMENT FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

3.1 Creation of barrier free environment for the persons with disabilities includes access to built environment in schools, colleges, academic and training institutions, offices and public buildings, recreational areas, health centres/hospitals etc. The barrier free component is under SIPDA from the beginning of Scheme *i.e.* 1999. Under this, grant is provided to Departments of the State Governments/Union Territories; Autonomous Bodies/Statutory Bodies/Public Sector Undertakings set up by the Central/ State Governments/UT Administrations, including Central/State Universities to provide barrier free environment for the persons with disabilities. This would include provision for ramps, rails, lifts, accessible toilets for wheelchair users, Braille signage and auditory signals, tactile flooring, slopes in pavements for the easy access of wheelchair users, engraving on the surface of zebra crossing for the blind or for persons with low vision, engraving on the edges of railway platforms for the blind or for low vision and devising appropriate symbols of disability, etc. Further, grants are also provided to make Government websites at the Centre/State and District levels accessible to PwDs as per the guidelines for Indian Government website issued by NIC and Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (D/o AR&PG), Government of India, which are available on their website "<http://darpg.nic.in>". For this Barrier free component, proposals are received from States/ UTs for any specific Building/s etc.

3.2 As per the norms, the proposals should be forwarded by the State/UT Governments. The estimate of the proposal should be at least signed by the Executive Engineer of the State. The proposal should be prepared as per the guidelines of accessibility standards. All documents should be submitted as per the check list provided. Further, the proposals under Barrier Free Environment are only considered on the basis of submission of significant amount of utilization certificates by the State/UTs for the GIA released in previous years. Thereafter, on receipt of complete proposals from the States/UTs/Organizations through State Governments,

all proposals are scrutinized by the Program Division prior to placing before the Screening Committee of the SIPDA Scheme, upon whose recommendations; the proposals are processed for Grants.

3.3 As per the information provided by the Department, the Components/Sub-Schemes wise allocation was started in 2018-19. In the year 2021-22, the notional allocation has been made in each sub-scheme of the umbrella scheme SIPDA. The details of allocation made under the creation of Barrier Free Environment for the last three years and the notional allocation for 2021-22 are as follows:

(₹ in crore)				
SI. No.	Year	BE	RE	Funds Released
1	2018-19	6.00	10.00	15.55
2	2019-20	13.00	19.60	15.55
3	2020-21	18.00	16.00	13.20
4.	2021-22	09.32	--	--

3.4 As per the information received from the Department, following is the status of the Grant-in-aid released to States/UTs and Universities/Colleges/Institutes etc.

Grant-in-aid released to the State Govts./UTs under SIPDA 'For creation of barrier free environment other than AIC'					
(₹ in Lakh)					
SI. No.	State/UT	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21 (Till 01.10.2020)
1.	Andhra Pradesh	77.37	0.0	0.0	0.0
2.	Himachal Pradesh	0.0	0.0	19.90	0.0
3.	Madhya Pradesh	635.16	135.24	0.0	95.49
4.	Meghalaya	0.0	0.0	1208.61	0.0
5.	Mizoram	0.0	0.0	0.0	108.94
6.	Punjab	64.59	82.00	0.0	0.0
7.	Tripura	0.0	0.0	0.0	112.88
8.	Uttarakhand	0.0	0.0	0.0	280.28
9.	Uttar Pradesh	0.0	42.43	0.0	0.0
10.	Puducherry	0.0	0.0	46.00	0.0
11.	Ladakh	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
12.	Rajasthan	0.0	6.03	0.0	0.0
	TOTAL	777.12	265.70	1274.51	597.59

Grant-in-aid released to the Universities/Colleges/Institutes etc. under SIPDA 'For creation of barrier free environment other than AIC'

(₹ in Lakh)					
Sl. No.	State/UT	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21 (Till 31.10.2020)
1.	Assam	0.0	88.60	0.0	0.0
2.	Kerala	0.0	0.0	75.00	0.0
3.	Punjab	191.87	0.0	0.0	0.0
4.	Rajasthan	0.0	427.00	0.0	0.0
5.	Telangana	0.0	225.35		
6.	Uttarakhand	0.0	516.73	0.0	0.0
7.	Uttar Pradesh	0.0	0.0	26.88	0.0
8.	Delhi	1000.00	34.37	137.01	0.0
9.	Puducherry	0.0	0.0	0.0	73.29
	TOTAL	1191.87	1292.05	238.89	73.29

3.5 On being enquired the reasons for releasing grants-in-aid only to a limited number of States/UTs from 2017 to 2021 under the Sub-Scheme, the Department *inter-alia* submitted in their post evidence written reply that:

“No proposals have been submitted by the remaining States and no pending proposal is lying at the Department for previous years.”

3.6 With regard to the reasons, due to which proposals from all the States/UTs are not being received and also as to how States/UTs would be made disabled friendly environment when the Department does not have any such proposals from these States/UTs, the Committee were informed that:

“Disability being a State subject, it is responsibility of States/UTs make their Buildings and other infrastructure accessible as per RPwD Act, 2016. However, Central government lends support to efforts of the State/UTs through Central Sector Schemes for limited purpose of AIC and Barrier Free environment. Department invariably writes to States/UTs in the beginning of every financial year to make them aware that Department is implementing the umbrella SIPDA scheme under which it has a component/sub-scheme for Creation of Barrier Free Environment. In this component, financial assistance is provided by way of grant in aid to States/UTs in order to make existing Government buildings accessible for the convenience of persons with disability.”

3.7 In this regard, a representative of the Department submitted during the course of oral evidence as under:

“It is dependent on proposals that we receive from whichever State Government or UT or organisation, and if the proposal is found to be in order and meeting all the criteria for giving a barrier-free environment, then we release funds.”

3.8 When the committee enquired about the time frame fixed for the creation of barrier free environment other than Central/States/UTs Governments institutions across the Country and steps being taken by the Department to sensitize the States/UTs, from where the proposals are not being received, the Department submitted in their post evidence written reply that:

“There is no fixed time frame for States/UTs under Creation of Barrier Free Environment, but Department takes serious efforts to sensitize the States/UTs to send the proposals under Barrier Free component. In the beginning of every financial year, the Department invariably writes to all States/UTs Government to send the proposals under Creation of Barrier Free Environment for persons with disabilities under SIPDA scheme. The last letter was issued on 20.04.2020. However, in the year 2021-22 such a letter has not been issued to States/UTs due to the proceedings of EFC for appraisal/continuation of SIPDA scheme being underway. As soon as the EFC gets finalized, the States/UTs will be advised to send proposals under the Barrier Free component. Further, the Department writes to States/UTs to clear their pendency of Utilization Certificates so that any new proposal would not be on held for want of submission of utilization certificates.”

3.9 On being asked about the details of the proposals pending, the Department submitted in their post evidence written reply that:

“Presently, there is no complete proposal pending under Barrier Free component. The proposals received were scrutinized and the States were requested to remove deficiencies. On receipt of complete proposals including submission of UCs these will be placed before the Screening Committee of the SIPDA Scheme upon whose recommendations, the proposals are processed further. The status of pending proposals is as follows:

Sl. No.	Proposals in Hand	Amount (₹ in Cr)	Remarks
1	Government of Himachal Pradesh	1.16	Proposal received in April, 2021 for 3 buildings. It is under examination and

			100% UCs are pending.
2	Government of Uttarakhand	0.80	Proposal received in April, 2021 for 11 buildings, it is under examination only 31% UCs submitted.
3	Govt. of Nagaland for 2nd installment	0.50	The proposal received in the month May, 2021 for final installment release, it is under process for final installment release.
4	Pondicherry University	1.07	A letter has been written to MHRD on 08.01.2021 for obtaining recommendation on proposal since it is university. After receiving recommendations, the AIC technical expert comments will be sought and placed before Screening committee. 100% UCs pending.
5	Government of Punjab for 15 Government buildings of SBS Nagar	5.63	The proposal received in March, 2021 is under examination and State Govt. have furnished only 44% UCs.
6	Government of Uttarakhand	4.13	Need to be technically evaluated. However, only 31% UCs have been furnished.
7	Government of Himachal Pradesh for 24 buildings of CSK Himachal Pradesh Krishi Vishwvidhyala Palampur Kangra	3.69	Revised proposal received in February, 2021, It is under examination and 100% UC pending.
8	Government of Assam	9.65	Proposal received in March, 2021. It is under examination and State Govt. has submitted 61% UC only.
	Total	26.63	

3.10 The Committee asked about the progress achieved in making the Central/States/UTs Government websites including websites at the district levels accessible for PwDs in compliance to the guidelines issued by NIC and Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances. Further the Department was asked as to and how does the Department propose to make private websites accessible to PwDs, as they are also being largely used, the Department *inter-alia* stated in the post evidence written reply that:

“In last three years no funds have been released for accessible website under Creation of Barrier Free Environment of SIPDA. With respect to private websites, the department has written to Ministry of Information Technology and Electronics (MeiTY) to make accessibility guidelines for the private websites also, since currently only GIGW guidelines are meant for

government websites.”

3.11 On being asked to explain how would the Department achieve envisaged objectives of creation of Barrier Free Environment in the absence of specific allocation under the Head of ‘Creation of barrier free environment’ for the year 2021-22, the Department stated in their post evidence written reply that:

“The notional allocation amounting to ₹ 9.32 crore has been kept for the year 2021-22 under Creation of Barrier Free Environment. Since, the overall budget of SIPDA for 2021-22 is ₹ 209.77 crore. Continuous efforts are made to receive proposals for Government buildings across States/UTs. However, being a Central Sector scheme, it depends on States/UTs also to send the relevant proposals under the scheme, as mandated in RPwD Act, 2016 and to also clear the pending UCs before any further releases can be made.”

3.12 The Department has submitted that this sub-scheme will continue as it has wider range as against AIC which has targeted interventions on identified buildings/websites etc. The Committee were also informed that after the campaign targets of AIC are met, the AIC and Barrier Free Component will be merged from 2024-25 onwards, so that only single sub-scheme will be present for Accessibility related issues.

3.13 The Committee note that grant is provided to the Departments of the State Governments/Union Territories, Autonomous Bodies/Statutory Bodies/ Public Sector Undertakings set up by the Central/State Governments/ UT Administrations including Central and State Universities, to create Barrier Free Environment for the persons with disabilities, which includes making Government websites at the Central/State and District levels accessible to PwDs. The Department could, however, release only ₹ 44.30 crore during 2018-19 to 2020-21. Further, only 11 States/UTs could be benefitted under this component since 2017-18 and Grants-in-aid could be released to the Universities/Colleges/ Institutions etc. in 9 States only. Considering the number of States/UTs where no proposals have been undertaken so far, the Committee doubt as to when the entire Country would be covered. As there appears to be a lack of enthusiasm amongst State Governments/UT administrations on this sub-scheme, the Committee feel that the Department needs to make extra efforts than merely sending routine letters to raise awareness, sensitize and remind States/UTs every year for sending viable proposals, if they intend to make this sub-Scheme successful. This could also include offering expert advice on preparation of viable proposals, preparing ready Reckoners and setting of annual targets as being done under Accessible India Campaign (AIC) etc. particularly since the Scheme is proposed to continue till 2024-25, after merger of AIC. The Committee also note that the work of making websites accessible for the disabled is languishing as no funds have been released in this regard during the last three years. Further, the progress in making the private websites accessible is

moving at a snail pace as the guidelines are yet to be framed. With on-line work becoming a norm in recent times, the Committee are of the strong opinion that the methodology adopted for fund allocation/release may be reworked to speed up these objectives. The Committee also recommend that the proposals received from States currently pending with the Department should be expeditiously processed and if handholding is required on some aspects, support must be forthcoming from them so that the proposals could be approved and implemented in coordination with respective State/UT. The Committee would like to be apprised of the action taken in this regard.

CHAPTER-IV

ACCESSIBLE INDIA CAMPAIGN (SUGAMYA BHARAT ABHIYAN)

4.1 While the Barrier-free Environment sub-scheme is under SIPDA since 1999, a nationwide campaign, Accessible India Campaign(AIC) or the Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan, was launched on 3rd December, 2015 to achieve universal accessibility for persons with disabilities in Built Environment (Buildings) under an identified list only, Transport System and Information & Communication Technology (ICT) ecosystem. Under this Campaign, grants are given to States/UTs to conduct accessibility audits and making only the identified public places/infrastructure of States/UTs fully accessible in built-up environment and making identified States/UTs websites accessible. Under the AIC, pattern of consideration of proposal is completely based on the number of 25 to 50 identified buildings across 50 cities of the country and no other building can be considered for fund release if it is not available in the pre-identified list. The objectives of the scheme are:

- a. Enhancing the proportion of accessible Government buildings;
- b. Enhancing proportion of accessible airports;
- c. Enhancing the proportion of accessible railway stations;
- d. Enhancing the proportion of accessible Public Transport;
- e. Enhancing proportion of accessible and usable public documents and websites that meet internationally recognized accessibility standards;
- f. Enhancing the pool of sign language interpreters; and
- g. Enhancing the proportion of daily captioning and sign-language interpretation of public television news programmes.

4.2 The details of the allocation of funds under the sub-scheme for the last three years and the notional allocation for 2021-22 are as follows:

(₹ in crore)

Sl. No.	Year	BE	RE	Funds Released
1.	2018-19	93.00	100.00	112.4
2.	2019-20	105.00	112.0	134.19
3.	2020-21	105.00	56.37	13.85

4.	2021-22	80.00	--	--
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4.3 As per the information provided by the Department the following has been the performance under various heads of AIC was as under:

“(i) Under built up environment, ₹ 445.99 crore have been released to States/UTs to make 1153 identified buildings accessible. Out of these, 494 buildings have been reported to have been made accessible by 9 States/UTs. CPWD has made 1030 Central Government buildings accessible. The State-wise achievement under the Built Environment target of AIC showing number of buildings funded, amount released and number of buildings completed is as follows:-

Sl. No.	State	No. of Buildings funded	Amount Released (Lakh)	No of buildings completed (As reported by States/UTs)
1	Andaman and Nicobar Islands	25	1080.91	20
2	Andhra Pradesh	38	1436.33	
3	Arunachal Pradesh	6	789.28	
4	Assam	24	697.84	
5	Bihar	21	925.14	15
6	Chattisgarh	47	2768.58	20
7	Chandigarh	43	415.38	39
8	Delhi	18	1393.78	3
9	Goa	30	444.63	
10	Gujarat	26	114.37	
11	Haryana	64	1598.36	3
12	Himachal Pradesh	11	439.47	
13	Jammu & Kashmir	32	1995.3	
14	Jharkhand	14	1166.85	
15	Karnataka	47	2708.65	
16	Kerala	28	429.98	
17	Lakshadweep	0	0	
18	Madhya Pradesh	31	973.51	
19	Maharashtra	142	2490.77	130
20	Manipur	0	0	
21	Meghalaya	23	2046.71	17
22	Mizoram	33	715.72	20

23	Nagaland	29	828.20	
24	Odisha	40	1975.47	26
25	Puducherry	28	273.16	
26	Punjab	20	1981.76	
27	Rajasthan	88	3813	78
28	Sikkim	35	578.14	
29	Tamil Nadu	30	3960.24	15
30	Telangana	16	919.24	
31	Tripura	14	2625.05	
32	Uttarakhand	16	538.5	4
33	Uttar Pradesh	137	4907.01	87
34	West Bengal	26	1394.73	17
Total		1182	48426.06	494

(ii) Under the transportation system, Railway Stations, Airports and Bus Carriers are being developed to provide barrier free services. The achievements are as under:

1. All 709 A1, A & B category railway stations, 7 Short Term Facilities namely, provision of non-slippery walkway from parking to Station building, provision of signage, provision of at least one drinking water tap, provision of at least one disable friendly toilet and 'May I help you' booth.
2. 35 International Airports and 55 Domestic Airports have been made partially accessible.
3. Out of 1,47,368 buses, 42,169 buses are partially accessible and 10,175 buses are fully accessible.

(iii) Under Information and Communication Technology ecosystem, ₹ 20.52 crore has been released to Nodal agency, ERNET India to make identified websites of States/UTs accessible. 588 identified websites of States/UTs have been made accessible by 23 participating States/UTs, out of these, 443 websites have been made live. In addition, 95 Central Government websites have been made accessible. State-wise details of Accessibility of Websites target of AIC:

Sl. No.	States	Made accessible	Made live
1.	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	0	0
2.	Andhra Pradesh	15	5

3.	Chandigarh	28	24
4.	Chhattisgarh	85	59
5.	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	11	6
6.	Daman & Diu	9	4
7.	Delhi	49	26
8.	Goa	14	14
9.	Gujarat	18	17
10.	Haryana	60	54
11.	Himachal Pradesh	23	18
12.	Jammu & Kashmir	18	12
13.	Jharkhand	37	36
14.	Karnataka	4	0
15.	Madhya Pradesh	39	36
16.	Maharashtra	23	21
17.	Meghalaya	34	33
18.	Odisha	2	0
19.	Puducherry	55	30
20.	Punjab	42	32
21.	Rajasthan	2	0
22.	Tamil Nadu	3	2
23.	Uttar Pradesh	17	14
	Total	588	443

4.4 On being asked about the annual targets fixed/achieved for the various works undertaken, the Department *inter-alia* submitted in its post evidence written reply that:

“As per the Output-Outcome Monitoring Framework for FY 2021-22, the targets set and achievements so far are as follows:

Financial year	Outcome	Target	Achievement
2018-19	Percentage of Buildings to be made accessible (out of total 1662)	NA	20 Buildings out of 1662
	Percentage of websites to be made accessible through ERNET (out of total 917 websites)	NA	Total 269 (29%)

2019-20	Percentage of Buildings to be made accessible (out of total 1662) - Cumulative	15% i.e.250	264 (16%)
	Percentage of websites to be made accessible through ERNET (out of total 917 websites) - Cumulative	45% i.e.412	500 (55%)
2020-21	Percentage of Buildings to be made accessible (out of total 1662) - Cumulative	30% i.e.499	371 (22.3%)
	Percentage of websites to be made accessible through ERNET (out of total 917 websites) - Cumulative	70% i.e.600	588 (64.12%)
2021-22	Percentage of Buildings to be made accessible (out of total 1662)- Cumulative	50% i.e.830	494 (29.7%)
	Percentage of websites to be made accessible through ERNET (out of total 917 websites) - Cumulative	85% i.e.780	588 (64.1%)

4.5 On being asked the reasons due to which initial target date of July, 2016 fixed for various works under the Scheme was extended to December, 2017, then August 2019 and now 15 June, 2022, the Department *inter-alia* stated in their post evidence reply that:

“(i) The Third Party Evaluation Report prepared by NILERD in April 2021, revealed that delays were due to the lack of understanding of basic purpose of the scheme, low level of knowledge and understanding of the accessibility standards and vis-à-vis their purpose to benefit persons with disabilities amongst the executing functionaries and frequent change in Officers monitoring the work at the State Level.

(ii) The discussions with States/UTs held during VCs held on 8th and 9th of June 2021 brought to light that in many States/UTs, no responses were received against the tenders called, as a result, work could not be undertaken. States/UTs also have reported many practical issues such as change in the nature of work to be undertaken in funded buildings due to other development projects such as metro construction, shifting of offices, proposed demolition, ownership issues, topographical difficulties, challenges posed due to weather, etc.

(iii) Further, since March 2020, the pandemic has caused further slowdown in the construction.

(iv) Non-receipt of proper holistic proposals/Cost Estimates, Utilization Certificates and work progress reports from States/UTs have also affected the completion of targets of the Campaign.”

4.6. With regard to the strategy adopted by the Department to ensure that the targets are achieved within the revised deadline of June, 2022, the Department, in their post evidence written reply, stated that:

“During the fourth meeting of the Central Advisory Board (CAB) held on 26.11.2020, CAB recommended extending the timeline of Accessible India Campaign up to June, 2022 for public buildings. This was in line with the Rights for Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act 2016, Section 45 which states that all public centric buildings are to be made accessible within a time period of 5 years from the date of notification of rules *i.e.* by June, 2022. In this regard, the Department has *inter-alia* taken the following steps:

1. Informed all States/UTs *vide* letter dated 31.05.2021 that proposal for release of 1st Installment should be sent by 31st December 2021. The deadline of 31st December 2021 was set in view of the fact that time of further 6 months will be available with States/UTs to make buildings accessible by June, 2022.
2. States/UTs were reminded about the targets and encouraged to expedite the implementation. Progress of each State/UT was sought regarding the steps being taken to reach the set targets under Accessible India Campaign. Responses in this regard have been received from 12 States/UTs.
3. As per CPWD’s communication dated 15.06.2021, out of the remaining 1100 buildings, 1030 Central Government buildings have been made accessible. In 34 buildings, retrofitment work is in progress.
5. All Central Ministries/Departments engaged with DEPwD in implementing the targets of AIC and formulation of Accessibility Standards/Guidelines have also been informed of the revised targets and requested to expedite the work accordingly.
6. Being nodal Departments regarding Disability issues on policy matters and with the implementation lying with respective Ministries/Departments. These Ministries/Departments have been requested to formulate timelines to achieve the set targets and inform DEPwD accordingly of necessary support that may be required from time to time.

However, in view of the pandemic, the construction sector having been affected has impacted the implementation and the targets of AIC. Based on current assessment and interaction with States, there is a visibility of completion of around 722 buildings by March 2022 and 794 buildings by June 2022. However, States/UTs stated during VC meeting that is very much dependent upon how pandemic unfolds in future.”

4.7 As per the details provided by the Department the following Targets and Timelines have been provided by States/UTs for completion of work:

S.No.	State	Buildings Audited	Buildings funded	Buildings completed as on 31.03.2021	Buildings stated to be complete as on 09.06.2021	Buildings anticipated to be completed by 31.03.2022	Buildings anticipated to be completed by 30.06.2022
1	Andaman and Nicobar Islands	25	25	15	5	5	
2	Andhra Pradesh	41	38			26	11
3	Arunachal Pradesh	24	6				
4	Assam	25	24				
5	Bihar	28	21		15		
6	Chhattisgarh	58	47	11	9		
7	Chandigarh	44	43	39			
8	Delhi	23	18		3	12	1
9	Goa	31	30				
10	Gujarat	52	26			26 (Reported 37)	27
11	Haryana	89	64	3			
12	Himachal Pradesh	22	11				
13	Jammu and Kashmir	25	32				
14	Jharkhand	50	14				
15	Karnataka	50	47				
16	Kerala	51	28				
17	Lakshadweep	57					
18	Madhya Pradesh	100	31			23	
19	Maharashtra	180	142	130		6	
20	Manipur	50					
21	Meghalaya	24	23		17	6	
22	Mizoram	33	33		20		
23	Nagaland	29	29			16	
24	Odisha	50	40	21	5	13	11
25	Puducherry	30	28			25	
26	Punjab	21	20				
27	Rajasthan	87	88	78			
28	Sikkim	36	35			32	3

29	Tamil Nadu	49	30	3	12		
30	Telangana	19	16			7	
31	Tripura	14	14				
32	Uttrakhand	26	16	4			
33	Uttar Pradesh	141	137	67	20	27	19
34	West Bengal	37	26		17	4	
Total		1621	1182	371	123	228	72
Cumulative Progress					494	722	794

4.8 On being enquired about the instructions issued to the various Central Ministries and State/UT Governments to ensure that the buildings/facilities falling under their jurisdiction are made fully accessible for PwDs by the extended date, the Department informed *vide* its post evidence reply that:

“Instructions have already been issued to the various Central Ministries and State/UT Governments to ensure that the buildings/facilities falling under their jurisdiction are made fully accessible for PwDs by the extended date. Furthermore, MoHUA has been requested that through CPWD measures may be taken for ensuring that all Central Government buildings are made accessible within the timelines mandated by the RPwD Act 2016. In this regard and to ensure that all new buildings are also made accessible, MoHUA during the Central Advisory Board Meeting held on 27.11.2020, informed that instructions have been shared with all States/UTs for incorporation of the *Model Building Byelaws* and *Harmonized Guidelines* in their local building bye-laws and that all States/UTs except for Sikkim have already made the required amendments.

The instructions received during the last meeting of Committee of Secretaries held on 27.11.2020 and Meeting of the Central Advisory Board on 26.11.2020, in regard to making buildings/facilities under the jurisdiction of various Ministries/Departments and States/UTs were sent through letters to all Ministries/Departments and States/UTs *vide* letters dated 21.12.2020, 17.03.2021, 19.05.2021, 31.05.2021 and again on 01.07.2021.

The matter of ensuring accessibility in State Government owned buildings by States/UTs has already been covered through the Targets 2 and 3 under the Built-Up Component of the Accessible India Campaign, which states that 50% of buildings in the State/National Capitals and 10 other important cities are to be made accessible by June 2022 by the States/UTs themselves. Further, in this regard, the Department also sensitized all States/UTs as well as the Central Ministries/Departments regarding the tasks to be undertaken and timelines to be adhered to, during the VCs held in December 2020, January 2021 and June 2021.

In case of failure to achieve the targets within extended timelines, the Rights for Persons with Disabilities Act provides for penal action in case of

contravention of the provisions of Act or rules or regulations mandated by the Act. All stakeholders have also been informed of this provision of the Act and have been urged to expedite the work of completion of the targets of AIC through regular monitoring at their end.”

4.9 Further, the Department has launched MIS Portal to monitor progress under AIC. Ministries/ Departments are regularly requested to upload details with photographs on MIS Portal. So far, information from 9 Central Government Ministries have updated their progress on the portal. Details of 1629 buildings at various stages of compilation of retrofitment work for providing features of accessibility have been uploaded by 28 States/UTs. Data of 319 Central Government buildings was also uploaded by CPWD.

4.10 On being enquired about the responsibility fixed for non-completion of the assigned task by the stipulated date, the Department *inter-alia* submitted in its post evidence reply that:

“The States/UTs that have to implement the targets of the Accessible India Campaign have been informed that proposals for fund release should be sent up till 31st December 2021, for the release of 1st instalment of funds to complete the work of retrofitment for features of accessibility by June 2022. Further, the Rights for Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 provides for penal action in case of contravention of the provisions of Act or rules or regulations mandated by the RPwD Act.”

4.11 When asked about the evaluation study/audit conducted to assess the progress/quality of various works undertaken in AIC and the action taken thereon, the Department in its Post evidence reply has submitted that:

“The following initiatives have been taken under AIC for evaluation study/ audit conducted –

- Officers from DEPwD have conducted Pre and Post-retrofitment audit of buildings in 2019 and 2020 on cases to case basis in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Karnataka, West Bengal etc.
- CPWD takes care of Central Government buildings verification audit. Training of access auditors is given through the CPWD’s training Institute of Ghaziabad. Till now 220 buildings have been audited by CPWD.
- Model Accessible Police Station Guide developed through SPA, New

Delhi and gaps and observations shared with MHA and DGPs of States/UTs;

- As a special drive by the Department, an initiative of conducting verification audit was carried out by engaging the students of architecture of Chandigarh College of Architecture for 39 buildings of Chandigarh retrofitted under AIC to assess the accessibility features being provided. The report was shared with the Chandigarh Administration for taking appropriate action. All States/UTs are asked to take up similar exercises for their buildings being retrofitted under AIC.
- Third party Evaluation of AIC was done by NILERD wherein audits were conducted for 10% of completed buildings.

A. Accessible Railway Stations

4.12 Railway is one of the major components of Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan as it has widest presence across the nation and is frequently used service by Divyanjan. One of the required thrust is to make Indian Railways fully accessible. As per the target fixed A1, A & B categories of railway stations and 50% of all railways to be made fully accessible by June, 2022.

4.13 As per Railways, total 1391 stations have been provided with short term accessible facilities namely, Standard ramp for barrier free entry, Earmarking at least two parking lots, Non-slippery walk-way from parking lot to station building, Signage of appropriate visibility, at least one drinking water tap suitable for use by Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan), at least one toilet (on the ground floor) and 'May I help you' booth. The Department is conducting regular meeting with Railways, the last meeting was held on 11.06.2021. The Department has also written several letters, last on 01.07.2021 for expediting the progress for making 50% of the Railways Stations accessible.

4.14 The Department has taken up the issue of Railway-specific accessibility guidelines in September 2019. Railways has prepared these guidelines and issued to Zonal Railways in February 2020. As intimated by DEPwD Railways consulted these guidelines with the office of CCPD for making it more comprehensive for which a

meeting was also conducted between CCPD and Railway officials on 07.01.2021. All suggestions given by CCPD office have been incorporated and the finalized guidelines are to be shared with DEPwD shortly for notification under the RPwD Rules, 2017.

4.15 During the review meeting of AIC held by Hon'ble Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment on 19 December, 2019, the Minister emphasized that Railways should create at least five Model Railway stations for further replication in other railway stations. He suggested that New Delhi Railway Station can be taken up as one of the Station under Model Accessible Railway Station and should be completed by 30 January 2020.

4.16 On being enquired about the status of Model Accessible Railway Stations, the Department in its post evidence written reply inter-alia submitted that:

“As per the information received from M/o Railways vide letter dated 05.03.2020, Railway Stations of Chennai, Delhi and Kanpur have been identified by M/o Railways for Model Accessible Stations. The Department has regularly written letters to Ministry of Railways in this regard, the letters sent at the level of Secretary on 26.05.2020, 16.10 2020 and 17.05.2021 to Railways for expediting the progress of work in the identified Railway Stations and update the as on status. However, the update on the same is still awaited from Railways.”

4.17 As regards to the verification Audit of selected 70 Railway Stations, the Department has informed that DEPwD has regularly written letters to Ministry of Railways, the last two letters being 12.03.2021 and 17.05.2021 for submitting the action taken report on the findings of the verification audit of selected 70 Railway Stations.

B. Accessibility Standards

4.18 As per the directions of the Committee of Secretaries, Ministries/Departments are to firm up sector-wise accessibility standards in consultation with Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities and submit to DEPwD by June 2021. The best global standards should be studied while preparing the standards. DEPwD to notify Rules containing sector-wise accessibility standards at the earliest after receipt

of proposals from Ministries/Departments concerned. In this regard Ministries/Departments working in the sectors related to public services such as MoHUA, Railways, Civil Aviation, Information & Broadcasting, Sports, School Education, Electronics & Information Technology, Culture, etc. have been engaged in the task of formulating the accessibility standards for their respective sectors.

4.19 As per the information provided by the Department, the status on the formulation of accessibility standard is as follows:

“(i) Work on Guidelines/Standards is yet to be started by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Department of Higher Education, Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Shipping, Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Jal Shakti, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Tourism and Department of Justice.

(ii) The Guidelines and Standards of Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Department of School Education and Literacy, Department of Consumer Affairs, Department of Sports and Department of Telecommunication are under draft stage and yet to be sent to CCPD.

(iii) Guidelines/standards of Ministry of Civil Aviation and Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology are submitted to CCPD for comments.

(iv) The guidelines/standards of Ministry of Railways have been consulted with CCPD but are yet to be submitted to DEPwD.

(v) Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs and Ministry of Road, Transport and Highways is required to share standards and guidelines to CCPD by July, 2021.”

4.20 The National Institute of Labour Economics Research and Development Labour (NILERD) had *inter-alia* recommended with reference to Accessible India Campaign that a module on accessibility of built environment should be mandatory in the curriculum of Civil Engineering and Architecture at Under-graduate and Post Graduate levels and it should also be mandatory for every student of Civil Engineering and Architecture to do a project in one of the semesters on

accessibility Audit of public buildings preferably of hospitals, dispensaries, schools, colleges, universities, courts, collectorates, blocks and panchayats.

4.21 In view of the recommendations, the Department has identified that young professionals and student of Architecture and Design must be made aware of the importance and requirements of universal accessibility during their formative years itself. Accordingly, the following steps have been taken:

- i. The Committee of Secretaries has directed the Department of Higher Education to develop educational modules for inclusion of universal accessibility related studies in the curriculum for Civil Engineering and Architecture. DEPwD has been coordinating with them for the same.
- ii. As a pilot project to generate community engagement in the field of accessibility, a students engagement programme was held through students of architecture of Chandigarh College of Architecture, under which a sensitization workshop was held for the students and they carried out verification audits of 39 buildings of Chandigarh retrofitted under AIC. The observation report was shared with Chandigarh Administration for corrective measures. All States/UTs were directed to carry out similar activities in their respective regions.

4.22 In addition to above, the Department has written to all States/UTs to undergo training (online) of concerned officers including State PWD Engineers being conducted by CPWD on accessibility.

4.23 The Committee are constrained to note that the overall progress of the AIC or Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan has been rather slow. Only 494 buildings (29.7%) out of a total of 1662 identified buildings have been made accessible by 9 States/UTs and 558 websites (64.61%) out of 917 websites have been made accessible under this Abhiyan since its inception in December, 2015. Despite postponing initial target date of July, 2016, several States viz. Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Punjab and Tripura still do not have any targets/timelines for making 193 buildings accessible by the extended date of June, 2022. The Committee are also not satisfied with the pace of work of the line Ministries as Railways are lagging much behind the schedule of making model Railway Stations or providing complete facilities for Pwds in their identified stations. Similarly the progress in other transportation sector i.e. Airports and road transport is discouraging as mostly 'partial' accessibility has been ensured. The Committee also find that penal provisions under the Act exist, however those have not been invoked in the cases where performance of States/UTs and line Ministries is not satisfactory and in its stead, target dates are being extended continuously. The Committee hope that there would not be any further extension beyond June, 2022. They recommend that the Department should adhere to the deadlines instead of extending those and vigorously pursue with the line Ministries/States/UTs to finish the work by target dates. The Committee also recommend invoking of penal provisions, in case timelines are not met, as a last resort, in the interest of Divyangjan.

4.24 The Committee feel that Railways is one of the major partners in the Accessible India Campaign as it has widest presence across the nation and rail transport is the maximum used service by Divyangjan. However, while the Committee would like to believe that the Department are sincerely trying to pursue matters, the accessibility guidelines are yet to be notified as those are awaited from the Ministry of Railways. The Ministry of Railways was not able to provide update on the Model Accessible Railway Stations as it was directed in the AIC Review Meeting held on 19 December, 2019 to complete New Delhi Railway Station under Model Accessible Railway Stations by 30 January, 2020. First of all, the Committee desire to know current position on this aspect. Further, the Committee have also been informed that the update on accessibility guidelines, Model accessible Railways Stations, Action Taken Report on the findings of verification audit of selected Railway Stations are also awaited from them, which is quite disappointing and unworthy of a seasoned and gigantic Ministry like the Railways. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the Department should seek reasons for non-compliance by the Ministry of Railways and take up the matter at Ministerial level so that the work on accessibility guidelines, Model accessible Railways Stations and Action Taken Report on the findings of verification audit of selected Railway Stations is completed at least now. The Ministry of Railways may also be made aware of the penal provisions of the Act in case there is further delay by them in completing their targets.

4.25 The Committee find that several Ministries are yet to start work on accessibility guidelines/standards which they were supposed to firm up in

consultation with Chief Commissioner for persons with Disabilities and submit to DEPwD by June, 2021. The Committee are surprised from further revelation that all the Ministries/Departments of Government of India have failed to accomplish the task by the target date of June, 2021 as they still are at various stages of finalization. The Committee are unable to understand the reasons for the tardy response from the Ministries/Departments of the Government of India in finalizing the accessibility standards by the stipulated date as this would mean that the Department would not be able to achieve the targets of Accessible India Campaign in the absence of sector-wise accessibility standards and a collective sense of responsibility from all Ministries/Departments. The Committee would, therefore, like to recommend that their sentiments are conveyed to them and suitable steps taken for early finalization of accessibility standards by various Ministries/Departments for being notified urgently.

4.26 In pursuance of the recommendation of National Institute of Labour Economics Research and Development, which undertook third party audit of AIC, the Department of Higher Education has been directed to develop educational modules for inclusion of universal accessibility related studies in the curriculum for Civil Engineering and Architecture. The Committee also find that all States/UTs have been directed to carry out activities similar to the one organized by students of Architecture of Chandigarh College of Architecture for community engagement in the field of accessibility and to organize training of concerned officers conducted by CPWD on accessibility. The Committee, while appreciating these initiatives taken by the Department, would like to be

informed about the latest status of work done on the directions given to the Department of Higher Education and also to States/UTs. The Committee would also like the Department to vigorously pursue with all the stakeholders for the implementation to avoid any delay.

CHAPTER-V

SUBMISSION OF UTILISATION CERTIFICATES

5.1 According to the Department, under AIC, UCs for all States/UTs become due after 12 months of release of funds. Any State/UT's default in the set timeline for submission of UCs or completion of work are not considered for further fund release till all pendency is cleared. In a Barrier Free Environment Scheme, after a project is approved and the first installment is released to an Implementing agency (State/UT Govt. in case of Barrier Free Environment), the Department calls for physical and financial progress report from time to time. Utilization Certificate of the Grant-in-aid released is also called for. The second installment is not considered until and unless the implementing agency shows satisfactory progress in the project and utilizes around 75% of the Grant-in-aid received by it. This aspect is also considered by the Screening Committee that examines the proposals received by the Department.

5.2 When asked about the details of pending UCs from States/UTs, the Department has furnished the following statement to the Committee:

Pending UCs in respect of GIA released under the SIPDA Scheme States/UTs wise

Sl. No.	State/UTs	Year	Amount released (₹ in lakh)	Amount of Utilization Certificates (₹ in lakh)	UCs pending (₹ in lakh)
1	Andhra Pradesh (Barrier Free)	2017-18	42.90	41.56	1.34
		2017-18	34.47	32.34	2.13
		Total	77.37	73.90	3.47
2	Assam (Barrier Free)	2012-13	389.22	388.69	0.53
		2013-14	347.79	251.14	96.65
		2014-15	10.00	10.00	0.00
		Total	447.01	649.83	97.18
3	Gujarat (Barrier Free)	2010-11	262.00	203.66	58.34
		2015-16	15.00	10.98	4.02
		Total	277.00	214.64	62.36

4	Himachal (Barrier Free)	2019-20	19.90	0.00	19.90		
		Total	19.90	0.00	19.90		
5	Jammu & Kashmir (Barrier Free)	2016-17	15.00	14.91	0.09		
		Total	15.00	14.91	0.09		
6	Karnataka (Barrier Free)	2013-14	1062.93	1028.18	34.75		
		Total	1062.93	1028.18	34.75		
7	Kerala (Barrier Free)	2015-16	14.46	0	14.46		
		Total	14.46	0	14.46		
8	Madhya Pradesh (Barrier Free)	2014-15	760.63	697.77	62.86		
		2017-18	100.88	53.03	47.85		
			29.65	6.03	23.62		
			39.87	30.82	9.05		
			123.75	123.75	0.00		
			2.5	0	2.50		
			43.90	33.60	10.30		
			159.10	0	159.10		
		2018-19	39.14	0	39.14		
			10.00	0	10.00		
			105.94	22.26	83.68		
		Total	1434.66	986.56	448.10		
		9	Maharashtra (Barrier Free)	2013-14	425.49	264.8	160.69
				2015-16	14.99	13.64	1.35
Total	440.48			278.44	162.04		
10	Manipur (Barrier Free)	2013-14	153.48	0.00	153.48		
		2014-15	15.00	10.96	4.04		
		Total	168.48	10.96	157.52		
11	Meghalaya (Barrier Free)	2019-20	77.57	9.00	68.57		
		2019-20	1131.06	1131.06	0.00		
		Total	1208.63	1140.06	68.57		

12	Nagaland (Barrier Free)	2015-16	249.56	249.56	0.00	
		2016-17	153.00	153.00	0.00	
			76.49	76.49	0.00	
			199.65	199.65	0.00	
		Total	678.60	678.70	0.00	
13	Puducherry (Barrier Free)	2019-20	46.00	0.00	46.00	
		Total	46.00	0.00	46.00	
14	Punjab (Barrier Free)	2016-17	5.6	5.15	0.45	
		2017-18	38.15	21.11	17.04	
			26.44	26.44	0.00	
		2018-19	47.91	47.91	0.00	
		2018-19	34.09	0	34.09	
		Total	152.19	100.61	51.58	
15	Rajasthan (Barrier Free)	2014-15	5.48	3.17	2.31	
		2018-19	6.03	0.00	6.03	
			Total	11.51	3.17	8.34
15	Sikkim (Barrier Free)	2013-14	142.44	123.11	19.33	
			Total	142.44	123.11	19.33
17	Tamil Nadu (Barrier Free)	2011-12	438.00	385.42	52.58	
		2013-14	15.00	12.78	2.22	
			Total	453.00	398.20	54.80
18	Uttar Pradesh (Barrier Free)	2010-11	1282.26	1281.53	0.73	
		2011-12	418.57	425.87	3.48	
			10.78			
			Total for 2011-12	2011.61	1707.40	4.21
		2015-16	79.16	79.15	0.01	
		2016-17	305.26	305.06	0.20	
		2018-19	42.43	35.42	7.01	
	Total	426.85	419.63	7.22		
19	Uttarakhand (Barrier Free)	2014-15	32.71	32.71	0.00	
			Total	32.71	32.71	0.00

20	West Bengal (Barrier Free)	2016-17	157.92	157.92	0.00
		Total	157.92	157.92	0.00
Grand Total (₹ in Lakh)			9277.85	8018.93	1259.92

Pending UCs in respect of Funds released under the SIPDA Scheme
States/UTs wise

Sl. No.	State/UTs	Year	Amount released (₹ in lakh)	Amount of Utilization Certificates (₹ in lakh)	UCs pending (₹ in lakh)
1	Andhra Pradesh (AIC)	2017-18	718.17	0	718.17
		2018-19	718.17	0	718.17
		Total	1436.34	0	1436.34
2	Andman & Nicobar Island (AIC)	2018-19	632.32	559.44	72.88
		Total	632.32	559.44	72.88
3	Arunachal Pradesh (AIC)	2019-20	789.28	0.00	789.28
		Total	789.28	0.00	789.28
4	Assam (AIC)	2019-20	697.84	235.26	462.58
		Total	697.84	235.26	462.58
5	Bihar(AIC)	2017-18	925.15	367.11	558.04
		Total	925.15	367.11	558.04
6	Chandigarh Administration (AIC)	2016-17	415.38	226.23	189.15
		Total	415.38	226.23	189.15
7	Chhattisgarh (AIC)	2017-18	688.59	494.97	193.62
		2019-20	1,988.22	0.00	1988.22
		Total	2,676.81	494.97	2181.84
8	Goa (AIC)	2018-19	189.04	0.00	189.04
			255.59	0.00	255.59
		Total	444.63	0.00	444.63
9	Gujarat(AIC)	2017-18	114.37	93.50	20.87
		Total	114.37	93.50	20.87
10	Haryana (AIC)	2016-17	253.60	890.49	707.87
		2017-18	22.60		
			277.51		
			164.57		

		2018-19	164.74		
			715.28		
		Total	1,598.36	890.49	707.87
11	Himachal (AIC)	2018-19	27.28	0.00	27.28
			21.21	0.00	21.21
		2019-20	320.13	0.00	320.13
			70.84	0.00	70.84
		Total	439.46	0.00	439.46
12	Jammu & Kashmir (AIC)	2016-17	42.74	37.35	5.39
		2018-19	509.05	94.72	979.26
			564.93	-	-
		2019-20	691.99	0.00	691.99
		2019-20	186.58	5.24	181.34
		Total	1995.29	137.31	1,857.98
13.	Jharkhand (AIC)	2017-18	583.43	0	583.43
		2018-19	583.43	0	583.43
		Total	1,166.86	0	1,166.86
14	Karnataka (AIC)	2018-19	1,021.21	0.00	1,021.21
			82.90	0.00	82.90
		2019-20	1,604.54	0.00	1,604.54
		Total	2,708.65	0.00	2,708.65
15	Kerala(AIC)	2018-19	429.98	0	429.98
		Total	429.98	0.00	429.98
16	Madhya Pradesh (AIC)	2017-18	290.00	106.93	183.07
			25.99	0.00	25.99
		2018-19	26.00	0.00	26.00
			441.49	66.62	374.87
		2019-20	190.03	0.00	190.03
		Total	973.51	173.55	799.96
17	Maharashtra (AIC)	2016-17	1,203.28	1,335.38	527.96
			660.06		
		Total	1863.34	1,335.38	527.96
18	Meghalaya (AIC)	2017-18	560.33	560.33	0.00
			962.95	1,288.11	0.00

		2018-19	325.16		
		2019-20	31.88	16.59	15.29
		Total	1880.32	1865.03	15.29
19	Mizoram (AIC)	2016-17	298.06	98.74	-
				199.32	
		2019-20	417.67	0.00	417.67
		Total	715.73	298.06	417.67
20	NCT of Delhi (AIC)	2016-17	19.03		
			1,298.00	1068.63	325.15
			31.40		
		2017-18	45.35		
		Total	1,393.78	1,068.63	325.15
21	Nagaland (AIC)	2016-17	432.12	432.12	0.00
		2017-18	78.48	78.48	0.00
		Total	510.60	510.60	0.00
22	Odisha (AIC)	2016-17	115.43	610.65	114.60
			491.71		
		2017-18	58.23		
			2.39		
			57.49		
		2018-19	108.83	125.32	903.17
			491.71		
			58.23		
			369.72		
		2019-20	221.74	0.00	221.74
		Total	1,975.48	735.97	1,239.51
23	Puducherry (AIC)	2017-18	273.16	0	273.16
		Total	273.16	0.00	273.16
24	Punjab (AIC)	2018-19	837.74	837.74	-
		2019-20	306.28	0.00	306.28
			837.74	0.00	837.74
		Total	1981.76	837.74	1,144.02

25	Rajasthan (AIC)	2017-18	3813.00	3513.45	299.55
		Total	3813.00	3513.45	299.55
26	Sikkim (AIC)	2016-17	578.14	292.79	285.35
		Total	578.14	292.79	285.35
27	Tamil Nadu (AIC)	2016-17	380.00	380.00	0.00
			387.38	692.18	31.70
			29.00		
		2017-18	307.50		
		Total	1103.88	1072.18	31.70
28	Telangana (AIC)	2017-18	459.62	0	459.62
		2018-19	459.62	0	459.62
		Total	919.24	0	919.24
29	Tripura (AIC)	2019-20	748.64	0	748.64
		2019-20	1,876.40	0	1,876.40
		Total	2,625.04	0	2,625.04
30	Uttar Pradesh (AIC)	2016-17 (Varanasi)	99.32	155.63	3.19
		2017-18 (Varansi)	59.50		
		Total (Varanasi)	158.82	155.63	3.19
		2017-18 (Lucknow Kanpur and Jhansi)	2,068.13	2,672.31	31.69
			635.87		
		Total (L,K,J)	2,704.00	2,672.31	31.69
		2017-18 (Agra)	309.80	308.85	0.95
		2017-18 (NOIDA)	68.85	273.25	13.63
		2018-19	218.03		
		2018-19	282.47	158.57	123.90
			245.79	170.96	74.83
		2019-20	76.04	0.00	76.04
2019-20	1,370.67	418.84	951.83		
Total	2571.65	1330.47	1,241.18		
31	Uttarakhand	2016-17	50.07	50.07	0.00

	(AIC)	2018-19	115.56	94.42	21.14
		2019-20	372.88	0.00	372.88
		Total	571.22	144.49	394.02
32	West Bengal (AIC)	2017-18	100.18	0	100.18
			189.34	0	189.34
		2018-19	150.66	0	150.66
			954.56	0	954.56
		Total	1094.74	0.00	1094.74
Grand Total (₹ in Lakh)			44178.13	19009.99	25,168.39

5.3 On being enquired about substantial delay in the submission of Utilisation certificates by most of the States/UTs, the representative of the Department stated during the deliberation with the Committee that:

“Sir, you have very correctly pointed it out. We have said this earlier also. Innumerable letters have been written. We have VCs with all the States and we conduct webinars with them only to goad them to move towards of barrier-free environment and more so under the Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan because it is a laid down thing. We also tell them that Sugamta is not a welfare activity, it is a right. They do not listen when you tell them to give UCs as they are dependent on making a barrier-free environment, जब तक वह प्रोपर नहीं होता है, हम उसे एक्सेप्ट नहीं करते, We have to teach them about the Act that under Section 89 to 92, that they may be penalised in case it is not made accessible within the given timeframe.

5.4 On being enquired about the penal provisions available with the Department against the States/UTs/Institutions where the funds released to them are not utilized alongwith the period during which funds remained idle, the Department, in its post evidence reply submitted that:

“It is mandatory to clear the substantial portion of pending UCs to consider any fresh proposal or proposal of 2nd installment from the State/UTs for previous grant in aid released under both sub-schemes namely Creation of Barrier Free Environment and Accessible India Campaign. Therefore, no further releases are made if substantial portion of UCs are not submitted. Further, Department writes to States/UTs to furnish utilization certificates and sends reminders also for effective implementation of the scheme. The last two DO letters were written on 23.02.2021 and 30.06.2021 to States/UTs. Further, during VC meetings also the status is taken and State/UTs are requested to clear the UCs.”

5.5 In this context, the representatives of the Department stated during the oral

evidence that:

“मैडम, सुगम्य भारत अभियान के दौरान वर्ष 2016-17 में पैसा देना शुरू किया गया, जब तक यह कम्पलीट नहीं होता तब तक हम दूसरा इन्सटलमेंट नहीं देते, नेचुरली हम यूसी का वेट करते हैं। इस साल 107 बिल्डिंग कम्पलीट हो गई है, उसमें कहीं लिफ्ट बनानी होती है और कहीं रैंप बनाना होता है क्योंकि लिफ्ट की जगह कम होती है, उसको पूरा करने में समय लगता है। इन सभी पर विचार करते हुए अब हमारे पास कम्प्लीशन रिपोर्ट आने लगी है। पिछली बार जब हम नवम्बर में मिले थे तो 356 बिल्डिंग थी, आज 371 है जबकि इस फाइनेन्शियल ईयर में 107 बिल्डिंग कम्पलीट हुआ। अब कन्सट्रक्शन एक्सिटिविटीज चलने लग गई है, हमें उम्मीद है कि अब हमारे पास कम्प्लीशन सर्टिफिकेट आने लगेगे। ”

5.6 With regard to the action taken against the States/UTs who have neither completed the work nor submitted UCs as stipulated, the Department submitted in its post evidence reply that:

“Under AIC, UCs for all States/UTs become due after 12 months of release of funds. Any State/UT default the set timeline for submission of UCs or completion of work are not considered for further fund release till all pendency is cleared. The same has been already been conveyed to all States/UTs through several letters, latest dated 31.05.2021 and also during the latest Video Conferences held on 8 and 9 June 2021. Further, to encourage States/UTs to submit UCs and report work completion in a time-bound manner, the following steps are taken by the Department:

- Regular follow up is done through letters, latest being sent on 31.05.2021.
- VCs to review the work, troubleshooting of issues related to implementation as well as for deciding the way forward are also held from time to time. The last VC sessions were held on 8th and 9th June 2022.
- From case to case basis one to one meetings are also held with States and practical support extended through telephonic discussions. One to one meetings were last held in the month of June 21 with the States of Arunachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Tamil Nadu and Haryana. The Department also provides handholding support and guidance to the executing agencies in the field of accessibility.
- Formats and checklists of documents which need to be followed for preparing correct proposals to request release of Grant-in-Aid were also communicated to States/UTs.
- For ease of understanding the concepts and requirements of accessibility in buildings, the Department has come out with an Easy Reckoner, a summary of the specifications of the 10 basic features of accessibility derived from the Harmonized Guidelines as well as a photographic compilation titled ACCESS- The Photo Digest (Volume I) on public centric buildings. These documents are meant to raise

awareness and sensitization among the professionals and officers of the executive agencies, so as to ensure correctness and quality of the work being executed on ground.”

5.7 On being asked about the steps taken by the Department to resolve the pendency of Utilization Certificates issue with States/UTs, the Department submitted in the post evidence reply that:

“Due to continuous efforts of Department the pending UCs has been reduced from ₹ 305.02 Crs in March 2021 to ₹ 266. 95 Crs in June 2021. Further, Department writes to States/UTs to furnish utilization certificate and repeated reminders are sent. The last two DO letters were written on 23.02.2021 and 30.06.2021 to States/UTs. Further, during VC meetings also the status is taken and State/ UTs are requested to clear the UCs. No new sanctions are given unless a substantial portion of the due UCs are submitted. Further, sincere efforts are being made to reduce the pendency of Utilization Certificates. However, due to COVID 19 pandemic, that has affected construction activities, funds might have remained unutilized with States/UTs.

For the Barrier Free Environment, which has UCs pending for some States/ UTs, the matter has been taken up at the level of Secretary with Chief Secretaries and also regularly raised in VC meetings held with States/ UTs.”

5.8 Regular receipt of UCs from State/UTs is very significant in the timely release of funds under the two sub-Schemes i.e. Creation of Barrier Free Environment and Accessible India Campaign, as further installments are not released and future projects not considered by the Department in the absence of Utilization Certificates from the States/UTs and Implementing Agencies. The Committee are very concerned about the delay in submission of Utilisation Certificates by several States and UTs. In case of Barrier Free Environment, Utilization Certificates to the tune of ₹ 1259.92 lakh are statedly pending from many States for several years. Similarly, in case of Accessible India Campaign, Utilization Certificates are pending against several States since 2010-2011. While COVID pandemic has impacted construction activities since 2020, it is surprising that lack of knowledge about various standards and similar reasons have largely contributed in delay in submission of UCs. The Committee feel disappointed that the available mechanism in this regard has not been able to address the persisting problem of submission of Utilization Certificates by the States/UTs despite the Department making efforts like, sending letters to State Governments, holding VCs for getting the pending certificates from States/Implementing agencies, creation of MIS Portal as well as monitoring by Secretaries, Ministers and even PMO. The Committee feel that withholding of 2nd installment in the absence of pending UCs, which is mandatory, obviously makes an adverse impact on the creation of barrier free environment for PwDs. Hence, there is a need to study the issue in depth and work out a new methodology including hand holding with the stakeholders and sensitization of all the Implementing Agencies about the rights of disabled persons as well as assistance of established Central agencies like NBCC, so that in submission of Utilization Certificates could be expedited and the work on Barrier Free

Environment is not disrupted in the interest of the disabled persons. The Committee would like to be apprised of the efforts of the Department to resolve the issue of Utilization Certificates at the earliest.

CHAPTER-VI

NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT FOR PwDs

6.1 A Central Sector Scheme was launched pan India by the Department in collaboration with the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship in March, 2015 along with a provision of the Project Monitoring Unit. The objective of the NAP is to enable persons with disabilities to become self-reliant, productive and contributing members of the society. Skill training is imparted through organizations empanelled as Training Partners from across the country. It is implemented as per the common norms/guidelines of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship. Though the scheme was launched in March, 2015, release of funds under the scheme started in FY 2016-17 as initial year was dedicated to empanelment of Training Partners. The details of the funds allocated and released are as follows:

(₹ in crore)

Sl. No.	Year	BE	RE	Funds Released	Beneficiaries	
					Target	Achieved
1	2018-19	121.00	70.00	43.75	40000	47286
2	2019-20	100.00	40.00	4.33	20000	1434
3	2020-21	77.00	30.00	4.50	8500	30
4.	2021-22	80.85	--	--	85000	-

6.2 The Department has submitted that no yearly target was fixed till 2017-18. In 2018-19, a target of training to 40,000 was fixed. Yearly targets for 2019-20 and 2020-21 couldn't be achieved due to various reasons. During the year 2019-20, NAP underwent a rigorous overhaul in the process as well as introduction of several monitoring mechanisms. Furthermore, in the current financial year, the COVID-19 pandemic has severely affected the skill training of persons with disabilities. Due to the outbreak of the pandemic, training commenced by some ETPs of the Department in March 2020 could not be completed, whereas some other ETPs which had planned to commence the training could not even start it. Training

activities were not allowed till September 21, 2020. Thereafter, though training activities had been allowed, it was permitted in Non-containment zones only and that also as per Standard Operating Procedure(SOP) requiring maintenance of proper social and physical distancing. This has reduced the overall capacity of training centres by almost half of the normal capacity. Since inception, an amount of ₹126 Crore has been released for training of 1.27 Lakh PwDs under the scheme. As per information received from ETPs, 41931 PwDs have been employed (wage employment as well self-employment) after training so far.

6.3 In order to continue with the training without any disruption during COVID-19, the Department has allowed ETPs to conduct training in blended mode and is also developing dedicated online Portal for providing online skill training to PwDs. Department is also developing Management Information System to enable the organization to submit the proposals for empanelment and training in online mode. Training Partners whose validity of empanelment with the Department has expired were also considered for extension of validity for one year.

6.4 State Wise details of financial assistance provided under NAP are as follows:

Sl. No	State/ UT	2016-17*		2017-18		2018-19		2019-20		2020-21	
		Funds released	No. of Beneficiaries**	Funds released	No. of Beneficiaries**	Funds released	No. of Beneficiaries**	Funds released	No. of Beneficiaries**	Funds released	No. of Beneficiaries**
1	Andhra Pradesh	1760591	500	1935086	120	1889372	165	0	0	0	0
2	Arunachal Pradesh	303306	100	474596	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	Assam	0		0	0	713174	120	0	0	0	0
4	Bihar	0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5	Chandigarh	196875	100	346040	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6	Chhattisgarh	0	0	36077801	3690	0	0	1147621	201	0	0
7	Goa	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8	Gujarat	1311948	400	1505807	500	7357484	0	0	0	829036	0
9	Haryana	996237	400	5344060	390	603678		2252953	0	1840625	30
10	Himachal Pradesh	412380	150	0	0	0		697006	0	0	0
11	Jammu and Kashmir	2449871	760	4308498	0	0		0	0	0	0
12	Jharkhand	0		0	0	0		0	0	0	0
13	Karnataka	1431375	400	0	0	2999945	0	0	0	0	0
14	Kerala	0		199478	20	0		0	0	0	0
15	Madhya Pradesh	10079658	3a	11782333	580	12195968		0	0	0	0
16	Maharashtra	1480776	400	7682008	3000	23368006	30	0	0	0	0
17	Manipur	2753323	780	4303421	400	0		0	0	0	0
18	Meghalaya	0		0	0	0		0	0	0	0
19	Mizoram	0		0	0	0		0	0	0	0

Sl. No	State/ UT	2016-17*		2017-18		2018-19		2019-20		2020-21	
		Funds released	No. of Beneficiaries**	Funds released	No. of Beneficiaries**	Funds released	No. of Beneficiaries**	Funds released	No. of Beneficiaries**	Funds released	No. of Beneficiaries**
20	Nagaland	0		0	0	0		0	0	0	0
21	New Delhi	22257963	6530	381246731	32050	327602476	44380	174447	60	5384000	0
22	Odisha	3800485	1090	3834799	0	0	0	1958880	210	0	0
23	Punjab	202800	50	11113464	1000	0		0	0	64915	0
24	Rajasthan	2128698	540	11139360	500	0		0	0	0	0
25	Sikkim	1249200	300	0		5047015		0	0	0	0
26	Tamil Nadu	0		40691071	3430	1783158	140	3024923	385	0	0
27	Telangana	0		2401464	300	17387308	1585	0	0	0	0
28	Tripura	0		0		0		0	0	0	0
29	Uttarakhand	0		0		0		0	0	0	0
30	Uttar Pradesh	1429468	420	35881417	3270	5929663	386	0	0	0	0
31	West Bengal	4300494	1350	101136650	8960	13449751	480	3193896	578	599389	0
32	Andaman and Nicobar Islands	0		0		0		0	0	0	0
33	Dadar and Nagar Haveli	0		0		0		0	0	0	0
34	Daman and Diu	0		0		0		0	0	0	0
35	Lakshwadeep	0		0		0		0	0	0	0
36	Puducherry	0		0		0		0	0	0	0
37	Expense on assessment	0		7083000		25477000		27717000	0	10468000	0
38	Administrative Expenses	0		736886		2189659		2535893		1259128	
39	NICSI creation of web portal	0		2754791		0		0	0	581715	0
	Nicsi for AEBAS							568170		0	
	ERNET FOR AEBAS							5074		0	
40	TOTAL	58545448	17430	671978761	58210	447993657	47286	43275863	1434	22846681	30

*NAP(National Action Plan) was launched on 21.03.2015. Release of funds started in FY 2016-17; **No. of beneficiaries related to release of 1st instalment

6.5 With regard to the criterion/method adopted for fixing the target of beneficiaries for each year and achieving the laid down targets, the Department submitted in its post evidence written reply that:

“Training is conducted through ETPs and it is demand based. No yearly targets were fixed till FY 2017-18. Thereafter, targets were fixed considering various factors such as previous years’ performance, budgetary allocation and overall targets in five years. To achieve the targets, ETPs who are allocated targets are consistently followed up. In recent past, some good organizations have been added as Training Partners and targets are now being assigned to Sector Skill Councils (SSCs) having network of Training Partners empaneled with them and good industry connects in their sectors. To expedite the process of centre validation, the work has been outsourced/ assigned to a 3rd party agency (SCPwD).”

6.6 The Committee were also informed that the following initiatives have been taken by the Department to streamline the skill delivery system:

- i. In order to avoid the situation of parking of funds specially with NGOs, the mechanism was changed in November, 2018 from "Project mode to Batch mode" and from "Release in Advance to Release after Commencement". In new fund flow pattern, 1st installment is released after commencement of training in batch wise manner and for actual number of candidates only whose training is started.
- ii. With a view to empanel only serious and reputed organizations, some changes were made in parameters and marks matrix such as, three years of experience in skill training and documentary evidence for each parameter mandatory for empanelment to rationalize the process also. One of such major changes was making three years of experience in skill training and documentary evidence for each parameter mandatory.
- iii. To monitor the attendance of trainees, Biometric attendance was introduced and made mandatory in November, 2018.
- iv. CCTV, Biometric attendance system, video conferencing facility etc. have been made mandatory in addition to accessibility of the centres as per centre guidelines introduced in June 2019.
- v. To ensure availability of infrastructures at the centres and their suitability as per centre guidelines, centre validation process was also introduced and inspection/audit of centres was made mandatory before allowing training at any centre. With a view to expedite the process it was assigned to a 3rd party agency – "Skill Council for Persons with Disabilities" (SCPwD) in November, 2019.
- vi. To ensure commencement of training and monitoring of ongoing training as well as availability of essential infrastructures with Training Partners, inspection was introduced.
- vii. Inspection of a number of centers of different ETPs located in various parts of the country were carried out prior to outbreak of pandemic.

6.7 On being asked the reasons due to which the number of beneficiaries was very insignificant in 2019-20 and 2020-21 despite crores of funds were allocated for training during these years, the representative of the Department clarified during the deliberation with the Committee that:

"मैडम, वर्ष 2019-20 में इसके घटने का मुख्य कारण है कि जब से दो-तीन सालों से स्कीम में प्रशिक्षण का कार्यक्रम चला तो हमने समीक्षा की। हमने कुछ जगह निरीक्षण किया और कार्यान्वयन की समीक्षा की तो उसमें बहुत सारी कमियां पाई गई थीं। उसके फण्ड्स यूटीलाइज्ड नहीं हो रहे थे। उसमें कुछ नीतिगत निर्णय लिए गए। पहले हम लोग अगर फण्ड्स रिलीज करते थे तो वह प्रोजेक्ट-वाइज करते थे। अगर किसी का 500 का प्रोजेक्ट है तो वह पूरे 500 के लिए हम अग्रिम पैसे दे देते थे। बाद में हमने देखा कि वह फण्ड प्रॉपर यूटीलाइज्ड नहीं हो पा रहा है, समय पर नहीं हो पा रहा है, प्रशिक्षण कार्यक्रम काफी देरी से शुरू होता है तो हमने यह निर्णय लिया कि हम अब प्रोजेक्ट-वाइज और एकमुश्त नहीं, बल्कि उतनी ही राशि जारी करेंगे जितनी कि ट्रेनिंग शुरू होती है। इससे अचानक काफी चेंज आ गया। प्रोजेक्ट की जगह हम बैच मोड पर आ गए। दूसरा, हम एक सेन्ट्रल गाइडलाइन्स भी लाए। पहले हमारे पास कोई सेन्ट्रल गाइडलाइन्स नहीं थी।"

6.8 The Department further stated in its post evidence reply that:

“The scheme was reviewed and some operational issues were observed such as non-commencement of training or substantial delay in commencement and completion of training after release of 1st instalment resulting in non-utilization or parking of funds by ETPs, lack of infrastructural facilities/ manpower required for training at centres, attendance system etc.

In order to resolve the issues with a view to streamline the skill delivery system and give the scheme a firm grounding for providing quality skill training to PwDs under NAP, the Department took various initiatives which slowed down the release of fund in 2019-20 and it was subsequently affected severely due to outbreak of global pandemic in last quarter of FY 2019-20.”

6.9 On being enquired about the reasons due to which the number of beneficiaries is either very less or zero in some States/UTs, the Secretary stated during the deliberation with the Committee that:

“जैसा कि आपने आब्जर्व किया है कि कई स्टेट्स में हमारा एलोकेशन जीरो-जीरो दिखाई दे रहा है। इसका मतलब यह है कि वहां पर हमारे साथ जो ट्रेनिंग पार्टनर्स हैं, वे हमारे पास स्टेट बेस्ड नहीं आ रहे हैं। इसका कोई भी कारण हो सकता है। हम उसके लिए भी एक प्लान बनाएंगे ताकि हम उनको सेंसिटाइज कर सकें। उनकी एडवोकेसी हो, जिसे हम हैंड होल्डिंग कहते हैं कि कोई भी प्रोजेक्ट कैसे भरा जाता है। अगर उसमें कोई कमी है तो हम उसे कैसे इम्प्रूव करवा सकते हैं, क्योंकि यह हमारे भी इंटरेस्ट में है कि जिस स्टेट में ट्रेनिंग हो रही है, उसका उस स्टेट में पैसा जाए ताकि उसकी मॉनिटरिंग और भी अच्छे तरीके से हो सके। मेरा आपसे यही निवेदन है कि हम इस पर और ज्यादा ध्यान देंगे। आजकल तो टेक्नोलॉजी का इस्तेमाल करते हुए हम बहुत अच्छे तरीके से स्टेट वाइज वीसी और वेबिनार्स कर सकते हैं। मैडम, मुझे इतने डिस्कशन के बाद समझ में आया है कि मैं ट्रेनिंग पार्टनर तो दिल्ली बेस्ड हो गया, लेकिन वह दिल्ली से जाकर ट्रेनिंग नहीं दे रहा है। वह वहां पर भी कोई ट्रेनिंग पार्टनर ढूंढ रहा है, जिसको वह आगे पैसा दे रहा है तो हम उस ट्रेनिंग पार्टनर को ही इतना स्टेंगथन क्यों न करें, जिससे वह सीधे हमसे ही पैसा ले। हम उनसे लिस्ट लेकर वहां पर वेबिनार करेंगे।”

6.10 On being enquired whether International Institutes/ experts are consulted before finalizing the training modules for PwDs, the Department in its post evidence written reply submitted that:

“As per MSDE guidelines, training can be conducted only in NSQF aligned courses developed by concerned Sector Skill Councils (SSCs) and approved by NSQC (National Skill Qualification Committee) presently under NCVET (National Council for Vocational Education and Training) and this is followed by this Department also for skill training of PwDs under NAP. A dedicated sector skill council – SCPwD (Skill Council for Persons with Disabilities) has been created by MSDE. SCPwD is a cross cutting sector council which takes

care of training needs of PwDs in any of the sector of skilling. SCPwD in consultation with industry partners and experts in the field of disability (including National Institutes of the Department having expertise in different disabilities) not only develops training modules itself but also adopts the modules developed by other sector councils and customize them as per specific requirement of PwDs.”

6.11 With reference to the concern of the Committee that training should be conducted as per the demand based skills of the area, the Secretary submitted during the course of oral evidence that:

“मैडम, आपने जो हमें दिशा-निर्देश दिया है या जो आपने एडवाइज बताई है, एक्चुअली करना वही चाहिए, जो आप हमें बता रही हैं कि जहां जिस स्किल की डिमांड है, वहां उसी स्किल का प्रशिक्षण देना चाहिए। इसके साथ-साथ आपने कहा कि बैंक का टाई-अप भी होना चाहिए ताकि उनको लोन मिल सके और इसके बाद वे अपना रोजगार शुरू कर सकें या कहीं पर उनकी इंप्लायबिलिटी हो। हालांकि, मैंने आज ही ज्वाइन किया है, लेकिन मैं अपने विचार जरूर कहना चाहूंगी। This is the ultimate aim of the entire Department. हमारे डिपार्टमेंट का मुख्य उद्देश्य ही यही है कि हम उनकी जो स्किल अपग्रेड कर रहे हैं, उसके बाद वह इंप्लायबल हो या वह अपना रोजगार चला सके। मैं आज की तारीख में सिर्फ यही कहूंगी कि हम इसको रिव्यू करेंगे और इसके बारे में जो हम ठोस कदम उठाएंगे, उसके बारे में समिति को सूचित भी करेंगे।”

6.12 With regard to the delay in transfer of Vocational Rehabilitation Centres from the Ministry of Labour & Employment to the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment as decided by Skill India Mission in June 2018, the Committee were informed in post evidence written reply by the Department that:

“Transfer of VRCs involved various processes including approval of the Ministers in-charge of both the Ministries. After, obtaining approval of both the Ministers in-charge, the proposal of transfer the VRCs from M/o Labour to DEPwD was submitted to the Cabinet Secretariat in September, 2020 from where it has been submitted to PMO for approval. Comments were sought from the Department by PMO which has also been furnished in April, 2021 and a decision in the matter is expected soon.”

6.13 On being enquired about the initiatives taken by the Department to allow training in blended mode and the benefit of extending validity period by one more year of Training Partners during COVID, the Department stated in its post evidence reply that:

“Training in blended mode is being allowed based on proposals of ETPs having infrastructures for the same. Since training modules of most of the trades include practical components ranging from 60 to 80 percent requiring mandatory hand holding training, it has not gained much popularity as ETPs are required to ensure the employability of trainees also which may not be

possible without practical trainings. SCPwD is also in the process of developing Online modules/contents in various trades. Accordingly, training in this mode is presently being allowed specifically in trades in which practical components is also possible online and SCPwD has also developed online contents. Due to 2nd wave of Pandemic most of the batches are incomplete due to non-completion of practical components.

In so far as empanelment of training partners is concerned, it is a continuous process and done by Selection Committee in its meeting held time to time. Selection Committee in its 19th meeting had decided to extend validity of such ETPs with certain conditions such as those who have either completed any project during their 03 years of empanelment, have suitable centres accredited through SMART or validated by SCPwD and are willing to continue their empanelment and conduct training. Responses of ETPs have been received and validity of ETPs fulfilling criteria will be extended by Selection Committee in its next meeting to be held in July, 2021.

In this context it may be mentioned that with a view to strengthen the training base for PwDs, Sector Skill Councils having good network of Training Partners empanelled with them are also being associated as PIA. FICSI has already been assigned a target of training of 3960 PwDs out of which training of 480 candidates started in Feb 2021 has already completed and training of around 1290 candidates is under progress. Moreover, as on date there are Training Partners having centres validated as per Centre Guidelines of the Department with annual capacity of training to 33000 (approx.) and no. of centres of various ETPs having validity are likely to be validated soon. Keeping these facts in view, there may not be problem in achieving targets subject to normalcy of conditions on account of Covid 19 pandemic.”

6.14 With regard to the system evolved by the Department to bring the reluctant PwDs for skill development, the Department submitted in its post evidence reply that:

“There is provision of Job Outreach activities in Common Cost Norms and ₹ 5000/- per candidate is paid to ETPs towards this component (in 03 instalments) for mobilization of candidates through various mediums such as job fairs/conferences/advertisements etc. In addition, provision of incentive to ETPs for placement above prescribed norms and Post Placement support to PwDs are also there to encourage the PwDs for availing training facilities.

Job fairs have been held by NHFDC till date and 1585 PwDs have been gainfully employed through these Job fairs/Mela. Other ETPs are also required to organize job fairs/conferences as part of their job outreach activities.”

6.15 On being enquired about the methodology adopted to guide persons trained in various skills such as crafts, etc. under the Scheme to promote spirit of entrepreneurship among PwDs, the Department submitted in its post evidence reply that:

“ETPs are directed to ensure employment after training either in wage employment or in self-employment. ETPs are, accordingly, supposed to guide trainees to become entrepreneurs. To Promote Abilities & Rehabilitation to work for the economic empowerment, social inclusion and rehabilitation of PwDs and persons belonging to marginalized groups, NHFDC has associated with ATPAR and IDEA-SAKSHAM for providing EDP programme to trained PwDs. In this connection, Seed Grants for Self-Employment through EDP programme has been provided by IDEA-SAKSHAM. NHFDC also provide loans to PwD trainees on concessional rates so that they could start their own business after training in any trade. NHFDC has already established 12 NSKs in five states namely Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh till date and 525 PwDs have already been provided skill training at these centres. Another 14 NSKs are shortly going to be commissioned in six states namely Haryana, Jharkhand, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh. The Establishment of NSK in each district of India likely to be made pan-India by Year 2030.”

6.16 On being asked about the inspection mechanism available to ensure commencement of training as well as availability of essential infrastructure with training partners, the Department in its post evidence reply submitted that:

“As per guidelines, 10-20% of a Training Partner is required to be inspected physically during ongoing training. Inspection is carried out by officers of the Department or its organizations such as NIs/CRCs. However, due to Covid 19 Pandemic physical inspections could not be conducted in desired no. Wherever training is not found satisfactory, 1st instalment is not released. Inspection through VC is also being undertaken.

Training is allowed only at centres validated by SCPwD or accredited through SMART process. The features mentioned above are mandatory in both the systems. In so far as use of Biometric attendance is concerned, presently it is on hold as per direction of the Government to contain the spread of Covid 19 pandemic. The Department has put in place its own centralized biometric attendance system which will be made effective once the restrictions over use of biometric is lifted.”

6.17 The Committee find that the under National Action Plan for Skill Development since its inception in 2016-17 Department has released ₹ 126.00 Crore and could train 1.27 Lakh PwDs. The Committee are concerned to know that the National Action Plan for Skill Development, which came into existence in 2016-17, had to undergo vigorous overhaul within a span of two years due to operational issues such as lack of guidelines, non-commencement of training or substantial delay in commencement and completion of training, lack of infrastructural facilities/manpower, etc. The Committee strongly feel that number of beneficiaries would have been more had the Department prudently drawn up proper guidelines for the Scheme at the beginning itself. Thereafter COVID-19 pandemic derailed all skill training efforts. Now, since the Department has reportedly taken several initiatives such as switching from 'project' mode to 'batch mode', introduction of Biometric attendance, inspection of centres, condition of three years of experience for ETPs in skill training, etc. to address the operational issues, the Committee expect that the quality of skill training and the number of beneficiaries would improve and the disabled persons would also be saved from incompetent ETPs. The Committee also hope that the Department would be able to achieve the target of 85000 beneficiaries fixed for 2021-22 and would similarly fix such targets for future so that good number of PwDs could be trained and made self reliant as early as possible. The Committee feel that to further boost the skill training, the process of development of Management Information System needs to be expedited to enable the organizations to submit the proposals for empanelment and training in online mode. The Committee, therefore,

recommend that a mechanism may be suitably devised and the initiatives taken to overcome the flaws are strictly implemented.

6.18 The Committee are surprised to note that several States have neither received any funds nor there are any beneficiaries since inception of NAP. On being enquired, the Committee was aghast to know during the course of evidence of representatives of the Department that such situation prevails in many States as either there are no ETPs or ETPs registered in one State are running the Skill Centres in another State. The Department had assured the Committee to address these issues very shortly. The Committee are of the opinion that such system deprives new organizations to become part of the Scheme. The Committee, therefore, recommend that a mechanism may be devised to promote organizations in all the States where ETPs are not existing and discourage ETPs from operating Centres in States other than where they are registered.

6.19 The National Action Plan for Skill Development for PwDs was launched to enable persons with disabilities to become self reliant, productive and contributing members of the Society. However, it has been found that only 41931 PwDs have been employed so far out of 1.27 lakh trained. The Committee are unable to understand the reasons for such a low level of employment despite several measures taken by the Department such as instruction to ETPs to ensure employment after training, NHFDC extending loans to PwDs, establishment of NSK's in various States, etc. Moreover, the Department also has the sub-scheme of providing incentives to private employers for providing jobs to PwDs, under SIPDA, which should be used for

trained PwDs. The Committee would also emphasize that if training is imparted in a trade that already exists in that area and the loan procedures are simplified, the Scheme would attract more persons for the training which will make them self reliant. The Committee, therefore, recommend that a comprehensive study may be conducted to identify the reasons for such a low employability despite several initiatives of the Department and suggest suitable remedy.

6.20 The prevailing COVID situation has adversely affected the overall education scenario and forced all entities to switch over to the online education system. The Committee find that the Department has allowed training in blended mode, however, it has not gained much popularity since training modules of most of the trades include practical components. Also ETPs are not forthcoming as they are required to ensure the employability of trainees. The Committee were informed that the training is presently being allowed specifically in trades in which practical components is also possible online. The Skill Council for Persons with Disabilities(SCPwD) has also developed online content for training. The Committee desire that the content developed by SCPwD should be included in the training modules by all the ETPs. The Committee also desire that in order to make training worthy during such circumstances, the Department may conduct a study to address problems faced by ETPs so that the purpose of training is achieved. The Committee would also like the Department to explore ways and means adopted by advanced countries for their PwDs during the COVID-19 pandemic and adopt them in collaboration with line Ministries/Departments so that the training of PwDs does not suffer. The Committee also recommend that the

Department should pursue for the early transfer of Vocational Rehabilitation Centres, as decided by Skill India mission in June, 2018 to the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities as it has been inordinately delayed.

CHAPTER-VII

AWARENESS GENERATION AND PUBLICITY SCHEME

7.1 The Awareness Generation & Publicity scheme launched in September, 2014 is operational from the Financial Year 2014-15 onwards. The Scheme has been revised in Financial Year 2015-16 to simplify and enhance its scope, objectives, eligibility etc. to broadbase the implementation for better and effective outcomes. Components admissible for assistance under the scheme includes setting up of a helpline for online counseling of the PwDs; content development; publications and news media; organizing national events; participation in the international initiatives or to support various programmes organized by NGOs or self-help groups; volunteer service/outreach programme for sensitizing commercial establishments and employers; recreation and tourism; participation in community radio; media activities. The Scheme also supports awareness campaign for skill development & employment generation for PwDs including job fairs and spreading awareness about universal accessibility by creating an enabling and barrier-free environment.

7.2 The Department has submitted that the assistance is available for Short term projects (one-time events or projects not exceeding 6 months duration) and Long term Projects (projects of 6 months and more duration) under the Scheme to Self-help groups; Advocacy and self-advocacy organizations and Psychological and emotional support service. Assistance is also available to community based rehabilitation organizations; organizations working in the field of disability sector; and organizations under administrative control of Central/State Govt. including departments, universities, institutions, colleges etc.

7.3 The budgetary allocation and fund released are as follows:

(₹ in crore)

Sl. No.	Year	BE	RE	Funds Released
1	2019-20	3.00	2.00	2.12

2	2020-21	2.50	1.00	0.69
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7.4 The State-wise funds released along with number of participants under the scheme as follows:-

Sr. No.	State	2014-15		2015-16		2016-17		2017-18		2018-19		2019-20		2020-21	
		Events conducted	Grant released	Events conducted	Grant released	Events conducted	Grant released	Events conducted	Grant released	Events conducted	Grant released	Events conducted	Grant released	Events conducted	Grant released
1	New Delhi	10	2725745	26	16154392	12	19333701	12	10708923	4	893750	3	12205000	3	5692912
2	Karnataka	4	3400000	3	262500	1	2000000		0	3	3834215		0		0
3	Odisha	1	412500	1	747000	1	337500	1	350000		0	2	2500000		0
4	Tamil Nadu	1	100000		0	2	481750	1	150000	2	530500	1	926250		0
5	Sikkim	1	475640	1	375000		0	1	500000		0		0		0
6	Maharashtra		0	3	3500000	1	654204	2	270806	1	75000		0		0
7	Andhra Pradesh		0	2	250000		0	4	900000		0		0		0
8	Gujrat		0	2	1485000		0	1	281250		0	1	318000		0
9	Assam		0	1	78000		0		0		0		0		0
10	Telangana		0	2	2200000	1	780000	1	747836	1	937500		0	1	1072578
11	Uttar Pradesh		0	3	1131000	3	1250000		0	1	1000000	3	1840200	2	1623003
12	Haryana		0		0	1	1017750	1	918668	1	924094	1	968250	1	131561
13	Madhya Pradesh		0		0	1	248325	2	428105		0	2	541750	1	11838
14	Uttarakhand		0		0	1	596250		0		0	1	718500	3	2159375
15	Punjab		0		0		0	1	1800000	1	1800000		0		0
16	Meghalaya		0		0		0	1	350897	1	1500000		0		0
17	Jammu & Kashmir		0		0		0		0		0	1	451200		0
18	Puducherry		0		0		0		0		0	2	725000	1	393750
19	Rajasthan		0		0		0		0		0		0	2	259050
20	Manipur		0		0		0		0		0		0	1	381937
									0						
	Total		7113885		26182892		26699480		17406485		11495059		21194150		11726004

7.5 On being enquired about the reasons due to which expenditure has been low since 2015-16, the representative of the Department submitted during the course of oral evidence that:

“महोदय, यह जागरुकता एवं प्रचार योजना है, इसके लिए प्रपोजल एनजीओ या गवर्नमेंट ऑर्गेनाइजेशन से मिलते हैं। जीओ से जो प्रपोजल मिलते हैं, स्क्रीनिंग कमेटी में पास हो जाते हैं, लेकिन एनजीओज़ के लिए कुछ गाइडलाइन्स बनाई गई हैं। इसके लिए राज्य सरकार से एप्रूवल होता है। जब हमारे पास प्रपोजल आते हैं, बहुत से प्रपोजल्स पर रिकमेंडेशन नहीं होता है इसलिए वे वापिस चले जाते हैं। 2016-17 साल से दी गई रकम तीन करोड़ थी और 2020-21 में 1 करोड़ 17 लाख ही दिए गए। 15 ऑर्गेनाइजेशन्स को पैसा दिया गया। हम चाहते हैं कि इस पर ज्यादा खर्च हो। हमने इस स्कीम को सिपडा के अंदर रखा, इसकी वजह यही है कि जितने ज्यादा प्रपोजल आ जाएंगे, उसके ऊपर खर्च करेंगे। हमारे प्रयास चल रहे हैं।”

7.6 In its Post evidence reply the Department further stated that:

“State Govt. takes a considerable time for recommending the proposals of

Non Govt. Organizations (NGO); very few awareness generation programme were held by the organizations during 2019-20 and onwards due to COVID-19 pandemic, organizations could not furnish the bills and vouchers in time for claiming the funds after completing the events, etc.”

7.7 On being enquired about the action taken to overcome these issues, the Department *inter-alia* informed in its written reply that:

1. In case of incomplete deficient documents, letters/reminders are sent to organisations to furnish the same as per the norms of AGP Guidelines.
2. Wherever, funds could not be released for want to UCs, the organisations are requested to furnish the same.
3. Letters are sent to Principal Secretary/Secretary of all States/UTs in the beginning of the financial year with request to instruct their subordinate offices to submit more proposals under AGP scheme. In addition, States/UTs are also requested to give wide publicity in order to receive more proposal under the Scheme from NGOs/Government Institutes;
4. In addition, University Grants Commission (UGC) and all Central Universities are also requested to submit their proposals under AGP scheme for the welfare of PwDs;
5. The Print Media has also been used for its wider publicity.
6. Due to COVID-19, the organizations have also been advised to hold virtual events under the AGP Scheme.
7. During pandemic, Deptt. also held virtual screening committee meeting to clear the Awareness Generation programme received from stakeholders.
8. For effective implementation/monitoring of the Scheme, since 19.12.2019, Screening Committee decided that no post facto approval shall be considered.

7.8 The Committee are surprised to note that the Awareness Generation and Publicity Scheme launched in 2014-15 has not taken off despite its revision in 2015-16 as only 160 events have taken place since its inception. In 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21, only 15, 17 and 15 events were held respectively and several States in the country have not organized even a single event till date. The Committee were informed during the evidence that the various proposals from NGOs were sent back as those did not have the recommendation of State Governments as mandated under the guidelines. The Committee are not convinced with this submission as there are several other Government Institutions/ Organisations which can organize such events, apart from NGOs but perhaps this sub-scheme does not have provisions on the same. The Committee feel that it is required to identify and iron out any flaws and bring out innovative features so that these events are organized by the institutions/Organizations, either Government or non-Government, as envisaged under the Rules. The Committee also suggest that social media platforms and Indian micro-blogging sites like KOO app can be explored to allow them to create awareness about rights of the PwDs, as these are easily accessible through mobile phones. The Committee are also concerned about the funds allocation because more events can only be organized if funds are enhanced. The Committee, therefore, feel that the funds allocation for the sub-scheme may be reviewed as wider dissemination of information to create awareness is necessary for the success of SIPDA and the welfare of PwDs.

CHAPTER-VIII

RESEARCH ON DISABILITY RELATED TECHNOLOGY, PRODUCT AND ISSUES SCHEME

8.1 The Research on disability related technology, products and issues Scheme was launched in January, 2015. The main objectives of this scheme are to promote research in prevention and prevalence of disability and the application of science & technology for the development of indigenous aids and appliances. From the year 2019-20, it has become part of the umbrella scheme 'SIPDA'. The operation of the scheme is overseen by a Steering Committee headed by Secretary, DEPwD. Proposals received under this scheme are evaluated and scrutinized by Scrutiny-cum-Technical Committee. Proposals recommended by the Scrutiny-cum-Technical Committee are considered by the Steering Committee for approval of financial assistance under this scheme. Institutes and concerned organizations are encouraged to come forward with the research proposals under this scheme. This scheme has two components:

- (i) Research and Development of assistive technology and devices for rehabilitation and education of PwDs.
- (ii) Study/survey on issues related to disability sector.

8.2 The Scheme envisages to:

- (a) Promote and support Study and research for facilitating evidence based policy decision relating to the priority areas of disability sector;
- (b) Promote research concerning prevalence of disability and measures for prevention thereof;
- (c) Promote and support research and development for enhancing habilitation and rehabilitation and such other issues which are necessary for the empowerment of persons with disabilities (PwDs);
- (d) Promote research and development for the application of science and technology to the development of indigenous products, aids & appliances for empowerment of PwDs.

8.3 As per the information available from the Department, no expenditure was incurred during 2019-20 and only ₹ 8.40 lakh out of BE ₹ 1 crore was utilized during 2020-21. 15 research projects with the total expenditure of ₹ 141.86 lakh have been sanctioned under this scheme from the year 2015 till date. During the current financial year, 04 proposals were received in the Department under the scheme. Scrutiny-cum-Technical Committee in its meeting held on 13.10.2020 has recommended one proposal regarding development of Mobile App for persons with visual disability for financial assistance for the consideration of the Steering Committee. Some major constraints in the development of devices indigenously are non availability of indigenous components in local markets, no BIS specifications for aids and assistive devices manufactured by ALIMCO as well as National Institutes to develop such products, lack of dedicated expertise/manpower like Biomedical Engineers in the National Institutes and technology for such products is not available. With a view to focus on Make in India, ALIMCO has recently setup its own state-of-the-art R&D Center at Kanpur in September, 2020.

8.4 On being enquired the reasons due to which Department has not been able to spend funds on R&D activities and steps have been taken by the Department to enhance the R&D activities, the Department in its post evidence reply that:

“The expenditure was less in the previous years due to non receipt of adequate proposals from agencies seeking funds under R&D scheme. Department is taking various steps including regular monitoring and follow up with the concerned agencies to ensure timely submission of proposals and relevant information for release of funds.”

8.5 On being asked whether the Department has sufficient funds and research scholars for R&D activities, the Department *inter-alia* submitted in its post evidence reply that:

“Yes, sufficient funds are available for this scheme. No research scholar is available in the Department. The Scheme is being implemented by various implementing agencies.”

8.6 On being asked about the criteria fixed for approval of the proposals for R&D projects received and what percentage of the proposals received are usually approved, the Department in its post evidence reply stated that:

“Under the Research and Development scheme, there are two committees for scrutiny and approval of proposals. Scrutiny-cum-Technical Committee, chaired by CMD, ALIMCO scrutinizes and technically evaluates the new/fresh proposals and submit their recommendations to the Steering Committee for its consideration. The Steering Committee, chaired by Secretary (DEPWD) further considers the recommended proposals for approval of financial assistance. So far about 32% of the proposals received under the Scheme have been approved.”

8.7 On being enquired about the reasons due to which devices such as battery/kits for motorized tricycle are still imported and technology is not being developed indigenously, the Department in its post evidence reply stated that:

“At present, the parts of Motorized Tricycle & Joystick Wheel Chair like Retrofit Kits and Batteries having imported components. In order to indigenize the same, ALIMCO is putting its extensive efforts. In order to procure the Battery (Lithium-iron-Phos) for Motorized Tricycle, an open e-tender on NIC-portal was floated by the Corporation and the Corporation did get a good response from Indian manufacturers (including Bharat Electronics Limited, CPSE). However due to some technical discrepancy, the tender could not materialize. ALIMCO is in the process of re-tendering the procurement of indigenized (Lithium-iron-Phos) Batteries. Efforts are also being made to tie-up with Indian companies to develop Retrofit Kits for Motorised Tricycle.

ALIMCO has now developed 100% indigenised “Sugamya Cane” with in- house Research & Development facilities for visually impaired persons. The mass production for the same will be started soon after its launch on 11th July, 2021. The Corporation’s Research & Development Cell is also under process to develop indigenous Battery & Hub drive motor in association with Bharat Electronics Limited (CPSE) & Indian Motor Manufacturers.”

8.8 On being enquired about the status of the research being done by DRDO to develop Cochlear implants, the representative of the Department submitted during the course of oral evidence that:

“Sir, the DRDO has been entrusted with the task of developing process of developing an indigenous cochlear implant and then using it under ADIP scheme of the Department is in progress. an indigenous cochlear implant. They have developed an indigenous cochlear implant but the clinical trials have to go on. The clinical trials had started but because of COVID pandemic some of them had to stop. These are going on now. It is expected that once these clinical trials are over, they can go ahead and introduce it under the ADIP scheme.

They in fact projected to have 15 trials of which four have started. In four of these trials, they have been able to see that it has been successful. There was some problem in one of these, but in the remaining cases they

could not go ahead because of COVID-19 pandemic. They want to test it in all these cases so that with certainty they can say that it can be introduced on a large scale under the ADIP scheme.”

8.9 On being asked about the steps taken by the Department to eliminate the constraints and ensure availability of indigenous assistive devices to PwDs, the Department submitted in its post evidence reply that:

“In order to indigenize the Aids & Assistive devices, ALIMCO has signed Transfer of Technology Agreement (TOT) with M/s Ottobock, Germany for manufacturing of High End Prosthesis at affordable prices in India and with M/s Motivation, U.K for manufacturing of WHO compliant two variant of wheel chairs at ALIMCO in India.”

8.10 The Committee were informed with regard to the current status of development of Mobile App for visually impaired persons by the Department in its written post evidence reply that:

“A project “Mobile App for Persons with Visual Disability” submitted by NIEPVD Dehradun has been approved under R & D Scheme with following components:

Sl. No.	Component	Phase	Duration	Cost
1.	Development of Web application by integrating the services provided by DEPwD, Govt. of India.	Phase I	03 months	₹ 6.65 lakh
2.	Development of Web application by integrating the services provided by States & Union Territories of India.	Phase II	03 months	

As per status received from the Institute, the current status of the project is as under:

“Phase-I due to COVID-19 related lockdown at Dehradun, implementation of the project has been delayed.”

8.11 The Scheme was launched with an objective to promote research in prevention and prevalence of disability and the application of science and technology for the development of indigenous aids and appliances for PwDs. The Committee are perturbed to note that the fund allocation under the scheme is too meagre. Only ₹ 3.30 crore were allocated for research on disability related technology, products and issues and ₹ 1.49 crore could only be spent since 2016-17. To develop indigenous aids and appliances for PwDs, the Committee desire that the Department should make sincere efforts to enhance its allocation so as to encourage ALIMCO, DRDO, National Institutes and other Organisations for research on disability related technology products. The Committee are convinced that the limited availability of funds is hampering the research and as a result the Department has not been able to develop even small products such as retrofit kits and batteries for motorized Tricycles necessitating those to be imported. Nonetheless, the Committee are happy to note that 'Sugamya' Cane for visually impaired persons has been developed by ALIMCO and that the Cochlear implant, being developed by DRDO, is at trial stage. The Committee desire to know about the mass production status after the launch of 'Sugamya' Cane. They expect that with the success of clinical trials, the Cochlear implant would be developed soon and made available to the persons with hearing impairment and would also like to see that the project to develop a Mobile App for persons with disability is completed in a time bound manner. They would like to stress upon the fact that there is a need to enhance allocation to promote research to develop technology indigenously and minimize dependence on import. The Committee also recommend that the Department should keep abreast of the development

of technologies, Apps etc. by various talented private entrepreneurs in the country too and involve them, wherever needed.

CHAPTER-IX

INCENTIVES TO EMPLOYERS IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR FOR PROVIDING EMPLOYMENT TO PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

9.1 To encourage private sector to employ persons with disabilities, a scheme of incentives to the employers in private sector for providing employment to PwD was launched in 2008-09. The scheme envisaged payment of employer's contribution for 3 years to the EPF and ESI by the Government with a salary ceiling of ₹ 25,000/- per month. The scheme was revised *w.e.f.* 1st April, 2016, whereby, payment of employers' contribution for EPF and ESIC by the Government has been increased up to 10 years. The salary ceiling has been removed for the PwD employees. The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) will bear one-third of the gratuity amount due and admissible to PwD employees. The administrative charges applicable on EPF/ESI contribution (*at the extant rates*) presently being deposited by the employers shall be borne by DEPwD.

9.2 The employers only need to intimate the EPFO/ESIC regarding appointments made by them and furnish employee's contribution to EPFO/ESIC. The employer's contribution shall be deposited to the respective accounts of PwD employees by EPFO and ESIC to whom DEPwD shall make payment to EPFO/ESIC in advance for this purpose. A provision has also been incorporated in the scheme that in case a private employer engages PwDs as apprentices in any particular trade and provides them employment on completion of the apprenticeship period, the stipend during the apprenticeship period payable to the PwDs shall be borne by the Government of India through DEPwD. The amount allocated and released during the last five years alongwith notional allocation for 2021-22 under the Scheme is as under:-

(₹ in crore)

Year	Budget Estimate (BE)	Revised Estimate (RE)	Fund released
2016-17	0.50	0.10	0.00
2017-18	0.10	0.10	0.00
2018-19	0.10	0.10	0.00
2019-20	0.50	0.00	0.00
2020-21	1.00	0.00	0.00

2021-22	(Notional) 0.10	0.00	0.00
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*From 2019-20 onwards, this scheme has been put under SIPDA which is an umbrella scheme, hence no separate budget allocation for the scheme.

The Department has submitted that despite publicity of the scheme, not much response has been given by the private employers. Hence, no funds have been released under the scheme since 2015-16.

9.3 On being enquired the status of the Scheme during the oral evidence, the representative of the Department submitted that:

“महोदय, इसका बहुत सरल और दुखी जवाब है कि हमने इसमें कुछ खर्च नहीं किया। इस स्कीम का रिव्यू 2016 में किया गया था, एक डिवाइस स्कीम बनाकर हम इस रिव्यू में इसे किसी और तरह से प्रोजेक्ट करने के प्रपोजल में हैं?”

9.4 The Committee note that the Scheme launched in 2008-09 to provide incentives to private employers to provide jobs to PwDs, despite its noble objectives, was, perhaps not found to be attractive and hence could not take off. It was subsequently revised in 2016 incorporating several measures to make it more attractive to employers in private sector so that employment opportunities are created by them for persons with disabilities and that they become self reliant. The Committee are disheartened to note that even after that, not a single penny has been released on this Scheme since 2016-17. The Committee were informed by the Department during the evidence that they propose to modify this Scheme so that the disabled get employment in private sector. The Committee recommend that Department in their process of review, should exhaustively examine the reasons due to which Scheme has failed and also examine the role of Entrepreneurs/Employers in offering employment to disabled in advanced countries. They may need to be informed about the kind of jobs that can be handled by PwDs efficiently. The Committee also recommend that providing direct incentives to private employers may work instead of opting to share EPF contributions. They further feel that suggestions can also be obtained from the Entrepreneurs/Employers and other stakeholders before the Scheme is revised.

CHAPTER-X

STATE COMMISSIONER FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

10.1 As per the provision contained in the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, all the State Governments are required to appoint a State Commissioner for persons with disabilities. Further, a person shall not be qualified for appointment as the State Commissioner unless he has special knowledge or practical experience in respect of matters relating to rehabilitation. The Functions of the State Commissioner are as follows:-

- (a) identify, suo motu or otherwise, provision of any law or policy, programme and procedures, which are in consistent with this Act, and recommend necessary corrective steps;
- (b) inquire, suo motu or otherwise deprivation of rights of persons with disabilities and safeguards available to them in respect of matters for which the State Government is the appropriate Government and take up the matter with appropriate authorities for corrective action;
- (c) review the safeguards provided by or under this Act or any other law for the time being in force for the protection of rights of persons with disabilities and recommend measures for their effective implementation;
- (d) review the factors that inhibit the enjoyment of rights of persons with disabilities and recommend appropriate remedial measures;
- (e) undertake and promote research in the field of the rights of persons with disabilities;
- (f) promote awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities and the safeguards available for their protection;
- (g) monitor implementation of the provisions of this Act and schemes, programmes meant for persons with disabilities;
- (h) monitor utilisation of funds disbursed by the State Government for the

benefits of persons with disabilities; and

- (i) perform such other functions as the State Government may assign.

10.2 On the scrutiny of information provided by the Department it was revealed that 18 States/UTs have appointed independent Commissioners/officers holding additional charge of commissioner for PwDs, so far. State/UT wise position is as under:

Sl. No.	Name of States/UTs	Whether State Commissioner are having independent Charge or additional Charge	Sl. No.	Name of States/UTs	Whether State Commissioner are having independent Charge or additional Charge
1.	Andhra Pradesh	Additional Charge	19.	Odisha	Additional Charge
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	Additional Charge	20.	Punjab	Additional Charge
3.	Assam	Independent Charge	21.	Rajasthan	Additional Charge
4.	Bihar	Independent Charge	22.	Sikkim	Additional Charge
5.	Chhattisgarh	Additional Charge	23.	Tamil Nadu	Additional Charge
6.	Goa	Additional Charge	24.	Telangana	Independent Charge
7.	Gujarat	Independent Charge	25.	Tripura	Independent Charge
8.	Haryana	Independent Charge	26.	Uttar Pradesh	Independent Charge
9.	Himachal Pradesh	Additional Charge	27.	Uttarakhand	Additional Charge
10.	Jharkhand	Independent Charge	28.	West Bengal	Independent Charge
11.	Karnataka	Independent Charge	29.	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	Additional Charge
12.	Kerala	Independent Charge	30.	Chandigarh	Additional Charge
13.	Madhya Pradesh	Independent Charge	31.	Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	Additional Charge
14.	Maharashtra	Independent Charge	32.	Delhi	Additional Charge
15.	Manipur	Independent Charge	33.	Jammu and Kashmir	Additional Charge
16.	Meghalaya	Additional Charge	34.	Lakshadweep	Additional Charge
17.	Mizoram	Independent Charge	35.	Puducherry	Additional Charge
18.	Nagaland	Independent Charge	36.	Ladakh	Additional Charge

10.3 Further, in terms of Section 84 of the RPwD Act, 2016, for the purpose of providing speedy trial, the State Government shall, with the concurrence of the Chief Justice of the High Court, by notification, specify for each district, a Court of Session to be a Special Court to try the offences under this Act. However, only 23 States/UTs have so far designated special court in terms of the Act.

10.4 As stipulated in the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, all the State Governments are required to appoint a State Commissioner for persons with disabilities. Also, the State Governments, with the concurrence of the Chief Justice of the High Court, by notification, are required to specify for each district, a Court of Session to be a Special Court to try the offences under this Act for the purpose of providing speedy justice to PwDs. The Committee are surprised to note that only 18 States/UTs have appointed independent Commissioners/officers holding additional charge till date and 23 States/UTs have designated special Courts in terms of the Act, in the last 5 years. The Committee are of the view that in the absence of full time State Commissioners and designated special Courts, the Scheme is bound to suffer as both the Institutions have important role to play as envisaged in the Act. The Committee also observe that since the State Commissioner is supposed to have special knowledge or practical experience in respect of matters relating to rehabilitation, hence appointment of officers with additional charge violates the provisions of the Act and defeats the intended purpose of this office. The Committee would therefore like the Department to pursue with the States for the appointment of State Commissioners and designation of Special Courts without further delay.

CHAPTER-XI

CROWD SOURCING MOBILE APP

11.1 The Committee were informed that the Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment launched the Sugamya Bharat App - a Crowd sourcing Mobile App on 2nd March 2021. It is a means for sensitizing and enhancing accessibility in the built environment, transportation sector and ICT ecosystem in the country. This App enables Divyangjan and the general public to bring to notice accessibility-related issues that require redressal. The App is made accessible for ease of use for persons with disabilities. Upon receipt of complaints through the App, the complaints are forwarded to nodal authorities, at the Central Government Ministries/Departments level or States/UTs level, by the dedicated Project Management Unit (PMU) after screening the complaints. The nodal authorities are responsible for taking action on the complaints. The complaints will be followed up by the PMU team, escalate the grievances that are not resolved to the next higher authority and keep the complainants informed. This Mobile App is an endeavour and a step towards achieving accessibility as mandated in Sections 40-46 of the RPwD Act, 2016.

11.2 On being enquired about the effectiveness of the App, the Department *inter-alia* submitted in its post evidence written reply that:

“Despite the onset of Pandemic in the country from the month of April 2021, the App has received a total of 518 complaints till now in all the three Verticals of Accessible India Campaign, namely, the Built Up Environment, the Transportation Systems and the Information & Communication Technology (ICT) ecosystem, as well as COVID related complaints. Out of these, 158 complaints have been closed and 360 have been forwarded to concerned authorities. Acknowledgments have been received in respect of 217 complaints that were forwarded. 26 complaints have been resolved by Nodal officers. The details are as follows:

- i) **Built Environment:** Out of 285 complaints received, 30 complaints have been closed, 255 have been forwarded to the nodal authorities and 202 have been acknowledged. 14 cases have been resolved. Most of the complaints are related to accessible infrastructure especially in Banks, followed by Government buildings, hospitals/clinics, private

buildings open for public use and cultural centres etc. Majority of complaints relate to Ramps. Other complaints relate to route/approach to the building, corridor and tactile flooring, accessible toilets etc.

- ii) **ICT Category:** Out of 88 complaints received, 60 complaints have been closed and 28 have been forwarded to the nodal authorities. 4 have been acknowledged and 3 cases have been resolved. Most of the complaints pertained to Government websites.
- iii) **Transportation Category:** Out of 57 complaints received, 34 complaints have been closed and 23 have been forwarded to the nodal authorities, of which only 5 have been acknowledged. 3 cases have been resolved. Nearly half of the complaints relate to road transportation, followed by Railways and Airways.
- iv) **Covid-19 Category:** Out of 88 complaints received, 34 have been closed and 54 have been forwarded to the nodal authorities and 6 have been acknowledged. 6 cases have been resolved. Majority of the complaints relate to vaccination, and food availability. A letter has also been issued by Secretary to all Chief Secretaries on 14.06.2021 to give priority to COVID related matters being raised on the portal.”

11.3 The Committee appreciate that ‘Sugamya Bharat’ App has been launched on 02 March, 2021 with an objective to crowd source the complaints being faced by PwDs in regard to inaccessibility of public infrastructure services. Out of total 518 complaints received, 158 could only be closed and 360 were forwarded to the concerned authorities. As per the information provided by the Department, only 26 complaints have been resolved till date. The Committee are of the view that the number of complaints in the initial months of the launch of App, particularly during the pandemic when lockdown was imposed in various parts of the country and people were mostly indoors, reflects poorly on the status of Barrier Free Environment in the country. The Committee strongly believe that the number of complaints would multiply once the App gains popularity amongst the public. Keeping the volume of complaints into consideration and the time consumed in addressing the complaints, as only 26 complaints have been resolved out of 518 received, the Committee feel that strong mechanism needs to be developed to follow up and resolve the complaints in minimum time possible. The Committee desire that the nature of the complaints may also be studied to understand the problems faced by PwDs in a particular area so that they can be addressed suitably in the upcoming projects. The Committee also desire that wide publicity should be given to Sugamya Bharat APP so that more PwDs use it and all the stakeholders, who are responsible for providing accessibility related facilities and services to PwDs, get the feedback from the beneficiaries.

CHAPTER-XII

HELPLINE FOR PwDs

12.1 The Committee were informed that the Department issued Comprehensive Disability Inclusive Guidelines For Protection and Safety of Persons with Disabilities in 26.03.2020 which, inter-alia, mandates the States/UTs to setup helpline numbers for them. The matter was also discussed in the meeting of Central Advisory Board on Disability held in November, 2020. The Board urged the States/UTs to take measures for implementation of these guidelines and submit a detailed consolidated report.

12.2. On being enquired about the status of the helplines to be set up by States/UTs, the Committee were *inter-alia* informed by the Department in their post evidence reply that:

“As per information available from various States/UTs, the following States/UTs have established helpline for persons with disabilities:-

Sl. No.	State/UT	Status
1	Bihar	Helpline number set up for Divyangjan- 8448385590,0612-2215041
2	Haryana	Helpline number set up for Divyangjan: 9888176357 (For Sign Language), 9876377800, 9888888363
3	Jharkhand	Helpline number set up for Divyangjan:0651-2401825
4	Karnataka	Toll Free counseling Helpline number for MentalHealth: 18001212830
5	Nagaland	Helpline set up for Divyangjan except Hearing Impaired - 8258953837,For Hearing Impaired 9862300893
6	Odisha	Helpline set up for Divyangjan –0674-2392803
7	Rajasthan	Helpline number set up for Divyangjan -18001806127
8	Tamil Nadu	Helpline number set up for Divyangjan -18004250111

9	Telangana	Toll free helpline for PwDs - 18005728980
10	Uttar Pradesh	Helpline number set up for Divyangjan -18001801995

12.3 The Central Advisory Board on disability, in November, 2020, had inter-alia urged the States/UTs to set up helpline numbers for the disabled persons. The Committee are surprised to note that only 10 States have established helpline till date which does not include Delhi, and desire that the matter should be vigorously pursued with all the remaining States/UTs to ensure that helpline is established in all the States/UTs within three months. The Committee would like to be apprised of the status at the Action Taken stage.

CHAPTER-XIII

RESERVATION FOR PwDs

13.1 As per the information provided by the Department, the reservation for persons with disabilities has been enhanced from 3% to 4% in Govt. Sector and 3% to 5% in higher educational Institutions. The Department has also identified 3566 posts for 21 types of disabilities.

13.2 On being enquired about the status of reservation, the representative of the Department informed the Committee during their course of oral evidence that:

“हमने इसका नोटिफिकेशन निकाल कर जितने भी सेंट्रल गवर्मेंट के स्टेब्लिशमेंट्स मैडम हैं, उनमें आरक्षण को तीन प्रतिशत से बढ़ा कर चार प्रतिशत कर दिया है।”

13.3 He further added that:

“मैं यह कह रहा हूँ कि दिव्यांगजन अधिकार अधिनियम में हमने जो आरक्षण बढ़ाया, तीन प्रतिशत से चार प्रतिशत किया, उसके तहत हमने नोटिफिकेशन निकाला है, अधिसूचना जारी की है, जिसके तहत 3,566 कुल मिला कर कैटेगरीज ऑफ पोस्ट्स को अधिसूचित किया है, जो कि विभिन्न दिव्यांगताओं के लिए सूटेबल पाई गई हैं। हमने यह नोटिफिकेशन निकाल दिया है और सभी राज्य सरकारों से कहा है कि राज्य सरकार की जो विभिन्न स्टेब्लिशमेंट्स हैं, वहां पर भी सारे दिव्यांगजनों के लिए पद हैं, उनको अधिसूचित किया जाए।”

13.4 With regard to the monitoring mechanism available with the Department to ensure that the reservation for PwDs is implemented by Central/States/UTs Govts. in government jobs and universities, the Department submitted in its post evidence reply that:

“DoPT is the nodal Central Department on matters regarding recruitment of personnel. They have an online system for compilation of information relating to recruitment of personnel including persons with disabilities recruited as per the reservation policy of the Government in terms of RPwD Act, 2016. DoPT also monitors the position and the Department obtains consolidated information from DoPT as and when required. As regards implementation of the provision of reservation by the States/UTs, the Department has been continuously taking up the matter with them. Hon'ble Minister, SJ&E has also written to all Chief Ministers on 31.08.2020. Further the matter was also

discussed in the Central Advisory Board on Disability in its meeting held on 26.11.2020 and the States/UTs were advised to implement reservation in government jobs in letter and spirit and issue appropriate instructions for implementation of Section 34 of the RPwD Act, 2016 and develop an online mechanism for compilation of data on appointment of persons with disabilities in terms of the provisions of RPwD Act, 2016.

As regards identification of 3566 posts notified by the Department on 04.01.2021 it is clarified that these are different categories of posts (Group A - 1046, Group B - 515, Group C - 1724 and Group D - 281) in Central Government establishments identified suitable for various categories of persons with benchmark disabilities. Each Central Government establishment while filling up the vacancies of the posts relevant to the organisation needs to refer to this list for issuing advertisement inviting applications from the candidates. This list is only a reference material for the Central Government organisations for recruitment of personnel against various posts.”

13.5 The Committee are happy to find that the reservation for persons with disabilities has been enhanced form 3% to 4% in Government Sector and 3% to 5% is higher educational sector. Appreciably, the Department has also notified 3566 posts in Group A, B, C & D for disabled persons on 4 January, 2021. The Committee are also aware of the fact that Hon'ble Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment has taken up the matter for implementation of the provisions of reservation with the Chief Ministers of the States. Also, Central Advisory Board has advised States/UTs to develop online mechanism for compilation of data on appointment of persons with disabilities. The Committee, in view of the decisions taken with respect to the implementation of reservation provision by Central/State/UT Governments, urge upon the Department to follow up the implementation in this regard and suitably pursue with the State Government/UT Administration for ensuring reservations for disabled persons as well as development of online mechanism for compilation of data on appointment of persons with disabilities. The Committee would like to be informed of the progress made in this regard.

NEW DELHI;

**05 August, 2021
14 Shravana, 1943 (Saka)**

**RAMA DEVI
Chairperson,
Standing Committee on
Social Justice and Empowerment**