



Study on the Situation of

Physical Accessibility of Persons with Disabilities to Public Places



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of Persons with Disabilities to Public Places

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We hope that the publication of this research can draw the serious attention of authorities and pertinent organisations with a view to advocating for the recognition of physical accessibility to public buildings and places as a human right of persons with disabilities and making public buildings and places physically accessible for all including persons with disabilities by building wheelchair ramps and providing other accommodations.

Lift is a need in public buildings for persons with disabilities and older persons and it is expected that the Ministry of Urban Development will seriously take this matter into consideration and stipulate the existence of lift in over-four-storeyed public and private buildings at the time of the amendment of construction standards.

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Report by Partner Institutions on the Construction of Wheelchair Ramps in Public Places

Key Terms

Physical accessibility: Providing further facilities to make a normal living possible for all persons on an equal footing and free of social and physical impediments.

Accessible: Here the term 'accessible' indicates the possibility for an individual to independently use the space and facility in a building.

Wheelchair ramp: This is a sloping stair that is used by persons with disabilities, older persons, pregnant women and patients in buildings.

Lift: Lift or elevator employed by wheelchair users, patients, persons with disabilities, children and others in public buildings and places. Of course, wheelchair constitutes the basis for this definition as it has the highest number of limitations among all conventional mobility assistance means.

Standard: Suitable and standardized design for constructing elevators, wheelchair ramps, toilets, door handles, water taps and so on that should comply with global and accessible standards for all particularly persons with disabilities. For instance, a standard wheelchair ramp has a stair with a height of two centimeters, a floor to a depth of at least 65 centimeters and a slope of maximum three per cent. As another example, public buildings should at least have one elevator for making its floors accessible that should have the following necessary specifications: (1) useful width of door 80 centimeters, (2) steady, stable and non-slippery floor, (3) width of a room 110-140 centimeters and (4) existing of assistance handles on elevator sides with a height of 85 centimeters.

Public places: The meaning of 'public places' in this research refer to those buildings what render different types of public services for people in the society.

Accommodation: Accommodation is used for those buildings that have been previously constructed and in which physical accessibility facilities have not been considered, but they are accommodated or are being made suitable for use by persons with disabilities by, for example, building wheelchair ramps.



Picture 1: Process of accommodation in a school

Special toilet for persons with disabilities: This is a special toilet for use by persons with disabilities who use wheelchairs and which meets specific physical accessibility guidelines. Such a special and equipped toilet should complete the following conditions:

- A. The floor should not be slippery,
- B. The minimum space in the toilet should be 150-170 centimeters so that a wheelchair can possibly move into it,
- C. The door of the toilet should open towards outside in a way that it is possible to open the door in emergency situations, and
- D. Flush should be located at a height of 45 centimeters from the floor.



Picture 2: An example of a toilet accessible for persons with disabilities who use wheelchairs

Introduction

According to a new report by the World Bank and the World Health Organization, persons with disabilities currently constitute 15 per cent of the world's population and most of these persons live in rural areas in developing countries.¹ Many of these persons lack an equal access to health care, education, job opportunities and other necessary services. One of these challenges that prevents their access to possible independence and their use of public spaces is lack of attention to their physical and mobility needs, resulting in their isolation and deprivation of their human rights. In our country Afghanistan, persons with disabilities comprise 2.7 per cent of all population, according to previous studies.² Although there is a significant difference between the World Health Organisation's data on persons with disabilities in the world (15 per cent) and the data on persons with disabilities in Afghanistan (2.7 per cent), the World Health Organisation has a more inclusive definition of disability than the organisational Handicap International and includes a variety of conditions such as diabetes, blood pressure irregularities, mental disorders, etc. This is while Handicap International considered severe disabilities such as intellectual, sensual and physical forms of disability. It is a dire need to do a more serious and recent study on the proper identification of and collect data on various categories of persons with disabilities.

The issue of access to public buildings has received little attention in our country, leading to the deprivation of a large number of people from enjoying their legal rights on an equal footing with other members of the society. As a result, disability has caused many problems at family and societal levels, because persons with disabilities have been deprived of accessing their human rights such as the rights to health and education and other human rights, they have been unable to utilize their talents and their families cannot properly look after them as there are no special rehabilitation and care centers.

Whereas physical accessibility to public buildings and places is one of the reasons to assist the participation of persons with disabilities in the community and the realization of their rights, this research indicates that no considerable attention has been paid to physical accessibility and various categories of persons with disabilities cannot enjoy their legal rights and access public buildings and places due to various types of disabilities, although accessibility has been enshrined in the relevant national and international laws.

Having established Persons with Disabilities Rights Units in eight regional offices, the AIHRC has made good achievements in order to monitor, protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities. The units are mainly managed by persons with disabilities themselves, indicating their potential. This research was also mostly conducted by the heads of these units in regional offices and sometimes by colleagues from other units in the AIHRC. Besides, monitoring and advocacy by the units have been very useful for increasing physical accessibility to public places.

¹ World Report on Disability, World Health Organisation and World Bank, 2011

² National Survey for Persons with Disabilities (NDSA), Handicap International, Kabul, Afghanistan, 2005

The present research has been conducted with a view to studying the present situation and focussing on the issue of physical accessibility as a legal right for persons with disabilities so as to draw the attention of the relevant authorities to the mat

Background on Physical Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities in the Country

A focus on the issue can give us the following findings:

First, the translation of the guideline on physical accessibility, which has been done by the organization NPAD with funding from the UNDP and printed by the organization Handicap International, is regarded as the first original source.³

Second, the Development and Ability Organization conducted a study in 2004, interviewed some 350 persons with disabilities, assessed the need for an accessible environment in a number of governmental ministries in Kabul and raised the lack of pavements suitable for persons with disabilities and physical access to public places as serious problems facing persons with disabilities.⁴

Third, the Ministry of Urban Development prepared a guideline for use by persons with disabilities inside and outside of a building. As stated by an official from the Ministry of Urban Development, the Ministry sent and brought the guideline to the attention of sectoral ministries and the Ministry's provincial departments so as to take the issue of accessibility of persons with disabilities into account in the design of public buildings. The official regards it the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled to monitor the matter.

Fourth, the Central Statistics Organisation conducted a study on multi-storeyed buildings in all 17 districts of Kabul city, the findings of which were shared by a representative of the Organisation in a conference on physical accessibility for persons with disabilities in Kabul Hotel. It was stated that there is a need to gather information about the types of facilities considered for persons with disabilities in multi-storeyed buildings. A multi-Storeyed building refers to a building that has two or more stories.

The findings of this study indicate that from the year 1381 to the year 1386, 1,103 multi-storied buildings have been constructed in Kabul city's 17 districts, comprising 11 percent of governmental buildings and 89 per cent of private buildings. Only 79 buildings, comprising 4.7 per cent of all buildings, have elevators that can be used by persons with disabilities. The study does not contain any information on wheelchair ramps.⁵

³ Guidelines for Designing an Environment Free of Problems and Obstacles: A Practical and Effective Manual for Reform and for Improving Physical Accessibility in Afghanistan

⁴ www.daoafghanistan.org

⁵ Presentation by a representative of the Central Statistics Organisation in a conference on physical accessibility, Kabul Hotel, Aqrab 1389

Section 1: Research Methodology

Data Collection Methods

In order to monitor the right of persons with disabilities to physical accessibility in public places, a questionnaire was developed and sent to the AIHRC's regional offices for implementation. The relevant staff started their monitoring programs by monitoring these places and additionally as they were monitoring a public building and they noticed that the building lacks physical accessibility facilities for persons with disabilities, they drew the matter to the attention of the relevant authorities so as to consider the issue of physical accessibility to public places as a right of persons with disabilities in the future.

Research Area

The research was conducted in 24 provinces that had been divided into eight regions. The provinces include Kabul, Parwan, Kapisa, Panjsher, Logar and Ghazni covered by Kabul regional office; Herat and Badghis covered by Herat regional office; Nangarhar, Konar, Nurestan and Laghman covered by Nangarhar regional office; Kunduz, Baghlan and Takhar covered by Kunduz regional office; Mazar-e Sharif, Jawzjan, Samangan and Sar-e Pul covered by Balkh regional office; Kandahar and Zabol covered by Kandahar regional office; Paktia and Khost covered by Gardez regional office; and Bamyan covered by Bamyan regional office.

Number of buildings monitored per regional office:

AIHRC Regional Offices	No of Monitored Buildings	Percentages
Kabul	253 buildings	20.4% of all monitored buildings
Nangarhar	320 buildings	18.5%
Balkh	296 buildings	17.1%
Bamyan	174 buildings	10.1%
Gardez	230 buildings	13.3%
Kunduz	90 buildings	5.2%
Kandahar	76 buildings	4.4%
Herat		
Total:	1,729 buildings	

Types of monitoring vary per regional office. For example, Balkh regional office focussed on physical accessibility in schools, Kandahar regional office on higher and professional education institutes and Jalalabad on state schools and institutions. Whatever the variables, the research indicate that physical accessibility as referred to in the legal discussion is yet to be institutionalized and the relevant authorities are yet to pay due attention to physical accessibility-related issues. While access is not limited to physical accessibility by persons with disabilities to public places, in the light of different categories of these persons, various programmes should be designed and necessary attention should be paid to transportation means, design and construction of pavements, recreational parks, parking lots, airports, corridors and etc. For instance, only the international terminal in Kabul airport is equipped with

mobile gate so that a wheelchair user can get on an airplane, but such facilities are lacking for persons with disabilities in other airports across the country.

Research Analysis Unit

The unit of analysis in this research is the physical accessibility of persons with disabilities to public places and the issue of physical accessibility to public places is one of the most basic rights of persons with disabilities that can pave the way for their integration and inclusion in the society. In this research, mainly public buildings, particularly those that have a direct connection to the day-to-day lives of different categories of persons with disabilities, were monitored. The reader may ask a question on why schools have received the greatest attention in this research? One of the reasons is that education is important for persons with disabilities, because there are approximately 196,000 school-age children with disabilities in accordance with a previous study in 2006, but more children are being victimised as a result of incidents and explosions on a daily basis. Their number is growing and if attention is not paid to the educational problems of these children, they will remain a useless force, while they can play a very good role in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the country.

Research Constraints

Certainly every research faces several obstacles and we too faced problems in carrying out this research. In general, the problems we faced during the research were as follows:

The researchers were not able to visit some areas in the country due to unfavorable environmental circumstances such as inaccessibility of villages and towns. This research focusses on urban and district centers. Our researchers, who are mainly persons with disabilities themselves, were not able to travel to distant parts of the country. It should be noted that the issue of physical accessibility in the area of disability was raised in the country after 2001 as a result of civil activism and accommodation in previous buildings and the construction of wheelchair ramps in new buildings and facilities were, to some extent, taken into account. Although the Ministry of Urban Development requires accommodation and accessibility in multi-storeyed and public buildings, it is necessary to take practical action in this regard and owners of governmental and private buildings should be compelled to provide mobility facilities for persons with disabilities if technical and construction facilities are available and a law on physical accessibility should be enacted and made available for the relevant institutions.

In order to understand which organizations have taken action in the area of accommodation and physical accessibility, it was deemed necessary to include an annex from the reports of partner institutions on making places accessible at the end of this report. Information gathered for this research was first recorded in a database by using SPSS software and then analyzed by using Excel software.

Research Structure and Substance

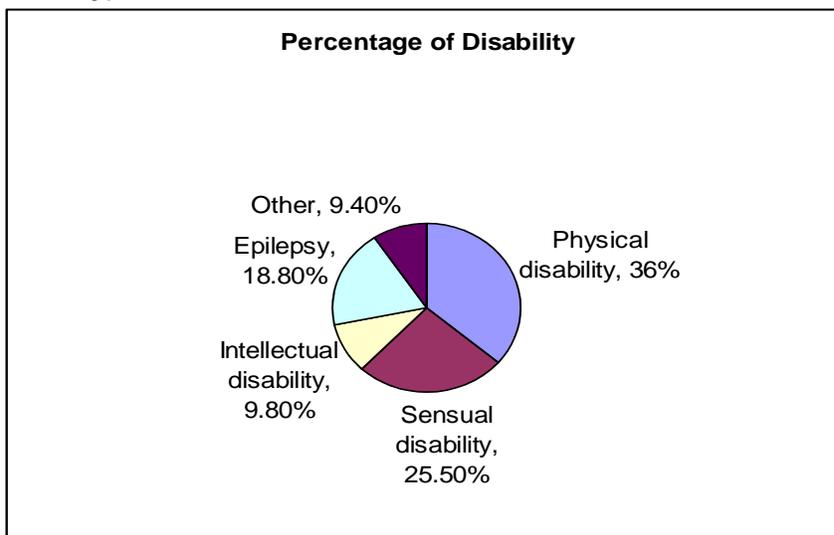
Although the research was very simply designed, it had considered physical accessibility for persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups of people as a completely human rights-

related issue that has unfortunately received little attention in our country, despite the fact that our country has acceded to numerous human rights conventions such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Afghanistan is, however, yet to take effective measures for the implementation of these rights, including the right of persons with disabilities to physical accessibility. Therefore, it is hoped that the substance of this research can highlight this need and it is also hoped that the analysis achieved through this research can draw the attention of the relevant authorities to the issue of access in general and physical accessibility in particular.

Research Sample

The objective of this research is the issue of physical accessibility of persons with disabilities to public buildings and places and we were able to monitor and observe 1,725 public buildings including schools, universities, teacher training institutes, governmental organisations, hospitals, clinics, mosques and non-governmental buildings in 24 provinces across Afghanistan so as to assess how physically accessible these buildings are for persons with disabilities and draw the attention of authorities to this need in constructing new buildings and in accommodating previous buildings, because the latest research by the organisation Handicap International in 2005 indicates that around 840,000 persons with disabilities in different categories live in the country and according to this research, the most common types of disability in Afghanistan are as follows:

- Physical disability such as disability in hands and feet, 36%
- Sensual disability such as visual and auditory impairment, 25.5%
- Intellectual disability, 9.8%
- Epilepsy, 18.8%
- Other types, 9.4%⁶



⁶ National Disability Survey of Afghanistan (NDSA), Handicap International, 2005

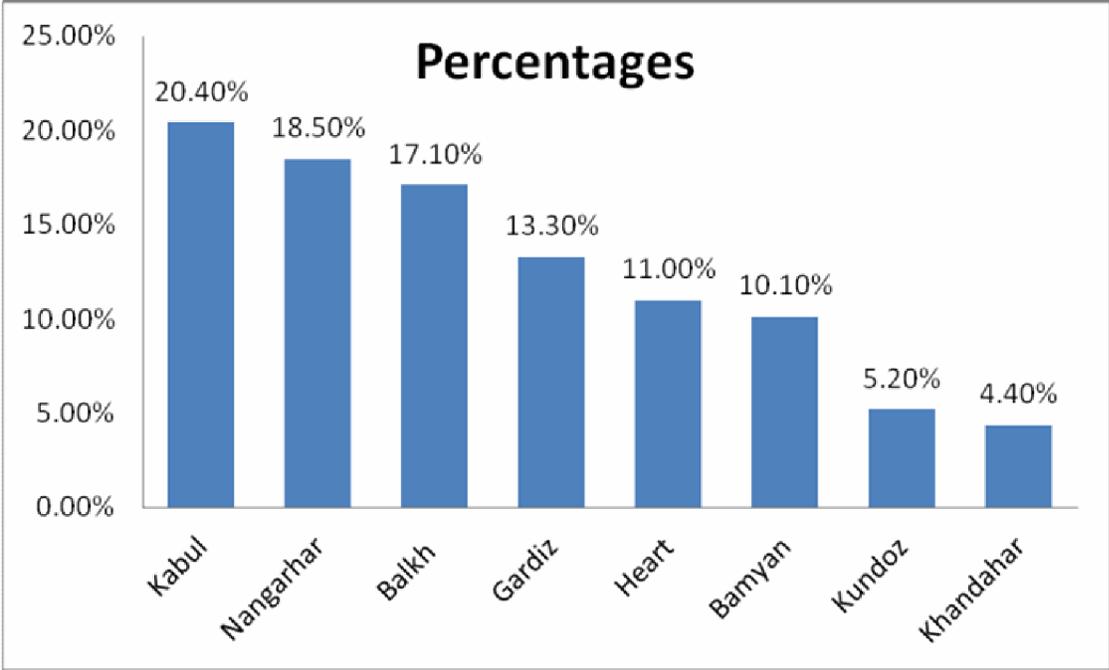
Of these, 196,000⁷ are children aged under 18 who are in dire need to access their right to education. The findings of this research show that of 650 monitored schools, only 324 had wheelchair ramps in their entrances, comprising 49.8 per cent of all monitored schools. But if we compare the data with all monitored buildings, it indicates 18.7 per cent and this data changes in terms of building premises. Of all monitored schools, 290 had wheelchair ramps in their premises, comprising 46.2 per cent of all monitored schools and 17.1 per cent of all monitored buildings. Therefore, we can say that while the largest category of persons with disabilities are those who suffer from physical disability and need facilities to access public places such as schools, this has not received much attention, despite the fact that the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities have enshrined the right to education for persons with disabilities and the Government of Afghanistan has ratified and is committed to implementing these Conventions.

Research Area

Filling out the questionnaires and collection of field information started in autumn 1389 in 24 provinces of the country including Kabul, Kapisa, Punjshir, Parwan, Logar, Ghazni, Herrat, Badghees, Nooristan, Laghman, Kundoz, Ningarhar, Konar, Baghlan, Takhar, Bamian, Balkh, Jawzan, Samangan, Sar-e-Pul, Zabol, Kandahar, Paktia and Khost and was completed in late winter of that year.

The number of buildings monitored by the regional offices is as follows: 20.4% by Kabul regional office, 18.5% by Jalalabad regional offices, 17.1% by Gardaiz regional office, 11.0% by Herrat regional office, 10.1% by Bamian regional office, 5.2% by Kundoz regional office and 4.4% by Kandahar regional office.

⁷ AIHRC Fifth Report on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights



Section two: Discussions and Legal Bases

Under various regimes up till now four laws have been passed for the protection of the rights of the persons with disability: the first law was approved during the government of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA)⁸, the second one was during the government of Mojaheddin⁹, the third one was during the rule of Taliban¹⁰ and the fourth one was during the present ¹¹government. A particularity of the present law is that the parliament endorsed the privileges for martyrs as a separate law. While looking at this law, we see that most articles of this law emphasize on paying cash money to them besides health treatment and suitable employments. Especially the first three laws have paid more attention to military personnel while the other spectrums of the persons with disability have been ignored.

After changes in the state structure and ratification of the new Constitution of Afghanistan in the Loya Jirga of Constitution, article 53 of the Constitution deals with the situation of the persons with disability, family members of martyrs, missing persons and elderly people. It obliges the state to provide better services for them. During the recent years endeavors have made by disability institutions at the international level to take a series of protective measures, among them the Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disability approved on Dec. 13, 2006 by the UN can be mentioned. In the light of the new Constitution, the Ministry of Martyrs, Disability, Labor and Social Affairs in cooperation with other related institutions prepared a draft of the law on the rights of persons with disability and handed it over to related sources. After completing its legal process, this law was ratified in the year 1389. This law consisting of 40 articles was enforced on 28 Qaus 1389. When we look at the articles of this law we see that this law is much better than the three previous laws. Before this law a sum of 600 afis was paid monthly to each person with a disability, but now the minimum cash payment for each person with a disability is 1500 afis per month. Other issues such as the rights of persons with disability to education, health, employment, rehabilitation programs, and physical access as well as awareness programs have

⁸ The law on the rights and privileges wounded and family members of the martyrs of Saur Revolution published in official gazette number eight, 31 Saratan 1361, series No. 512 consisting of seven chapters and 38 articles

⁹ The law on the rights and privileges of wounded, missing and family members of the martyrs published in official gazette in 1st issue, 21 Sunbolla 1373, series No. 768.

¹⁰ The law on the rights and privileges of wounded, missing and family members of the martyrs of Islamic Revolution and other citizens of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan published in official gazette ,Saturday 1420 h.q, series No. 768 consisting of seven chapters and fifty three article

¹¹ The law on the rights and privileges of the people with disability published in the official gazette, series No 1030, consisting of three chapters and forty articles ratified on 28/9/ 1388

been taken into consideration in this new law and it protects the rights of people with disability. But when we look from other angles to this law we see that most of its articles are based on sympathy rather than the legal rights of the persons with disability. On the other hand many aspects of discrimination can be witnessed in this law. For example article forty eight of this law reads that all the people with natural disability are deprived of these privileges and there is no specific article about the persons with mental disability or women and girls with disability. Another shortcoming in this law is the issue of its implementation. There is no financial estimation and funding for implementation of rehabilitation and treatment of the persons with disability. The cash money for military people with disability is paid through international assistance. Another problem is that the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability was approved by the parliament later and it was endorsed by the President and published in the official gazette. This law, especially its discriminatory articles including article seventeenth should be amended in the light of this convention. Article seventeenth reads "Natural or mother born people with disability can benefit from the privileges of this law except its articles four and eight" Disability in this law should be defined according to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability

Definition of Disability:

The Law on the Rights and Privilege of the Persons with Disability which was ratified by the State of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on the base of article fifty third of the Afghan Constitution defines a person with a disability as follows:

"A disability is a condition or function judged to be significantly impaired relative to the usual standard of an individual or group. The term is used to refer to individual functioning, including physical impairment, sensory impairment, cognitive impairment, intellectual impairment mental illness, and various types of chronic disease".

The Universal Declaration on the Rights of Person with Disability reads, " Disabled person as someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities."¹²

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability ratified on 13 Dec. 2006 by the UN general assembly defines disability as follows: "Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."¹³

¹³ -www.unic-ir.org

The World Health Organization also defines disability as follows, "Disability is a physical, mental, social impairment or a combination of them which prevents continuation of a normal life. Such a person is called a person with disability"

What is Physical Accessibility?

Provision of humanitarian facilities for the continuation of life as usual which is accessible for all social strata on an equal base and without social and physical obstacles. Therefore, we should assess the issue of physical accessibility for the persons with disability as mentioned in the national and international documents. Article twenty fifth of the Law on the Rights and Privileges of the People with Disability about designing constructions and transportation reads: "The ministries, state administrations and other organs while designing constructions, buildings, recreation and sports sites, public roads, transportation and other technologies should take into consideration accessibility facilities for the people with disability."¹⁴

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability which was ratified by the parliament of our country mentions in its article nine about physical access and enabling of the persons with disability to live an independent life and fully participate in all sphere of social life and specifies the locations including, "buildings, roads, transportation facilities and other indoor and outdoor facilities such as schools, houses, medical establishments, work environments, communication facilities and other electronic and emergency services."

Resolution 48/96 of the UN General Assembly dated 20 Dec. 1993 on provision of equal opportunities and access facilities for the people with disability reads:

1. The states should take necessary measures for the removal of physical obstacles in front of the persons with disability in the living environment. Such measures should include devising of standards, guidelines and evaluation of the laws for ensuring accessibility of the persons with disability to different facilities in the society like houses, buildings, public transportation services and other transportation means, roads and other facilities.
2. The states should ensure that sufficient information about policies related to the persons with disability and necessary measures for realization of access facilities are put at the disposal of constructors, architects and others who are involved in designing and building of physical environments.
3. The conditions related to access facilities for the persons with disability should be included in the designing and building of the physical environment at the beginning stages.
4. While establishing norms and criteria of access facilities for the people with disability consultation should be made with their organizations. These organizations should be involved in planning and designing of the construction projects and building process at the local level to ensure maximum access facilities for the persons with disability.

¹⁴ - www.unic-ir.org

Section Three: Findings of this research

Storey numbers and Types of Ownership

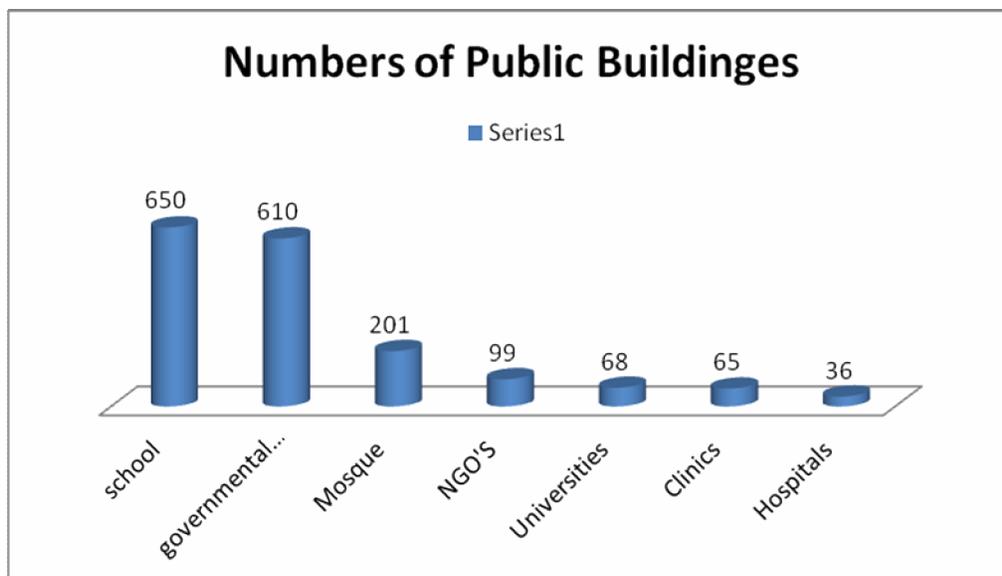
Out of the total buildings monitored and evaluated in 24 provinces, 69.6 % of them were one storey building and similarly 22.5% were two storey buildings and the remaining were three and four storey buildings. Only 12 buildings were taller than four storeys.

Out of 1729 buildings, 650 of them were schools, 610 state offices, 201 mosques, 36 hospitals, 65 clinics, 68 education, higher and semi-higher educational centers or teachers training colleges and 99 of the buildings related to nongovernmental organizations.

Out of 1725 buildings, 85.5% are state public buildings, 14.5% are non-governmental buildings. In this monitoring report the number of state buildings is high because the people with a disability need to go there for their daily needs and these buildings are included schools, clinics, hospitals and other state buildings such as departments, ministries, universities and teacher training colleges. Although nongovernmental public buildings such as banks are used by the people with disability, the state is obliged to maintain the accessibility of the people with disability to such buildings. Based on the laws and international conventions the state is responsible to prepare suitable accessibility of the people with disability to all public services in order to ensure their human rights in the society. Therefore, in the first step the state should take serious measures to ensure accessibility of the people with disability to the state buildings and the public buildings should be according to international norms and accessible to the people with disability and then make the private sectors to observe those norms and take into consideration accessibility of the people with disability to the public buildings.



A corridor of the Justice Ministry



Location and the Years of Construction:

Out of 1729 monitored buildings, 1614 of them which comprise 93.3% located in the cities or district centers while 115 of the buildings located in the villages which cover 6.7% of the monitored buildings.

The construction years of the buildings are different. This evaluation report shows that 32.4% of these buildings were constructed in 2001, 20.5% of them were constructed between the years 2002- 2005 and 28.3% were built in the years 2006- 2009, and 5.6% of these buildings were built after the year 2010, while the construction date of 13.2% of the buildings is not mentioned.

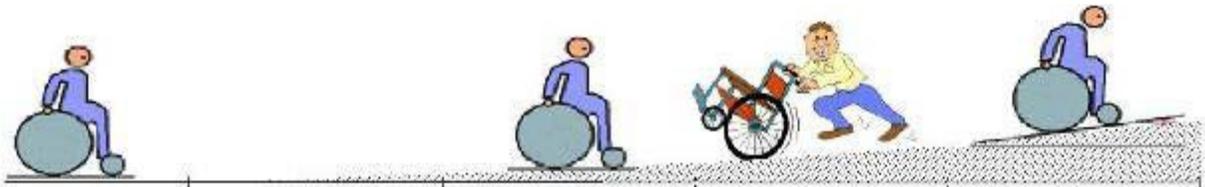
Quality of Ramps

Prior to analysis of the issue, we would like to briefly discuss whether there are or are not any standards considered for these ramps. The ramps should have the following standard specifications:

- ▣ The steepness of the ramps should be minimum 4% and maximum 8%.
- ▣ In case of long ramps, a turning should be considered after every 10 meters.
- ▣ The thickness of the railing bar should be 4 centimeters and it should be supported by an arbor at every 70 centimeter of its length. The height of the railings should be 90 centimeters so the people in wheelchairs and the ones who are sight impaired could easily grip the bar. The width of the ramp starts from 90 centimeters and, depending on the area and the situation of the ramp, the width could be made further in places where people frequent more.

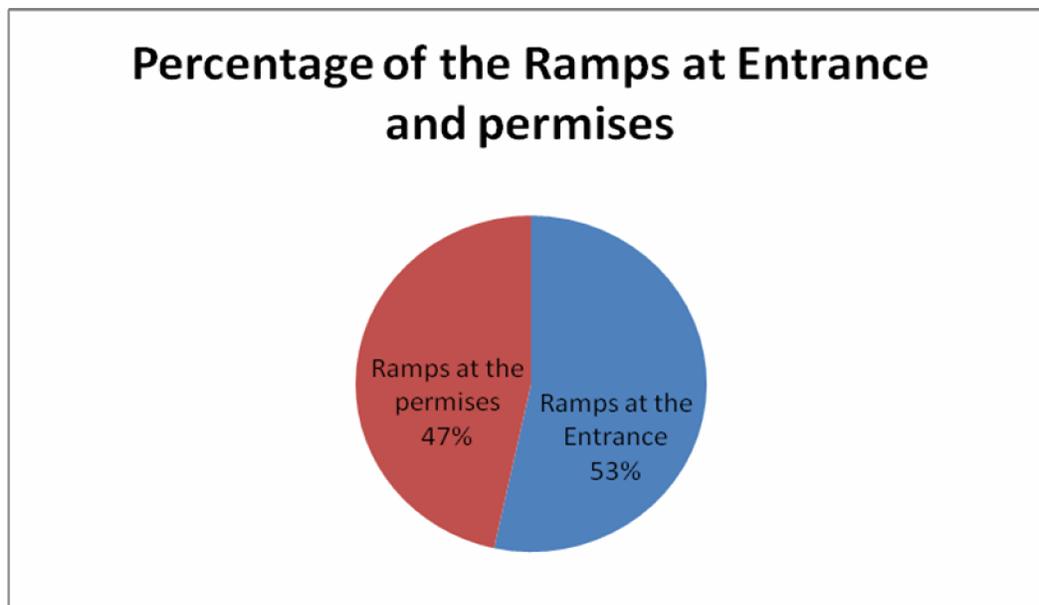
- ▣ The surface of the ramp should be studied so it could prevent people from slipping and at the same time disallowing water pools to form on the surface.
- ▣ The color of the wall or the railing of the ramp should be like that of the wall it is attached to or is close to.
- ▣ A spout should be considered at the edge of the ramp side so that water does not get accumulated on the ramp surface but diverted into the spout; this would prevent the wall from destruction while adding to the beauty of the wall.
- ▣ The turning of the ramp should be 1.2 meter square so the wheelchair could easily turn around.
- ▣ The railing of the ramp should be supported by vertical stands/ rods at every 70 centimeters and the stands or rods should get connected together by three parallel and horizontal rods so they could provide further security for the persons with disabilities.

Conclusion: 29.2% of the buildings monitored have ramps to facilitate the people with disabilities and 66.6% of them do not have such facilities. Thus, the issue demands advocacy and awareness raising efforts to a great extent. The following picture demonstrates what has been stated above.



Ramps (inside and at the vicinity of the buildings)

As shown by the statistics, 41.6% of the buildings visited had ramps at their entrances and the other 58.4% did not. 36.3% of the same buildings had ramps inside their premises and 61.7% did not.



Lefts

There were lefts in only 0.8 percent of the buildings visited and only 0.4% of the said lefts were functioning. The availability of electricity should also be noted; there would be no physical use of lefts if there is no electricity in the buildings. One other problem is to be sought the guideline issued by the Ministry of Urban Development; based on the guideline, the only buildings that have more than five flours are eligible to have lifts installed. The people with disabilities and the aged ones cannot have access to public buildings and solve their problems without the said facility. This is despite the fact that Afghanistan has stipulated the subject matter of accessibility in the law of Rights and Privileges of the Persons with Disabilities. The government has also signed the Convention of the Rights of the People with Disability that has stipulated the subject matter of physical accessibility as a right for a great spectrum of persons with disabilities while binding the governments to observe the same. The convention statements have been published in the official gazette. Therefore, the government and the private sectors need to consider the mentioned subject matter. Otherwise, a large group of people is deprived of their human rights due to the inaccessibility to the public buildings.

Toilets

The study shows that only 19.7% the buildings had the facility of toilets exclusive for the persons with disability. 79.6% of the buildings did not have such facilities. As for the schools monitored, 25% of them had the mentioned facility. However, if the figure is compared in terms of the number of all the buildings, it would fall to 9.4%. And in the case of hospitals and clinics, the figure changes to 4.4% and 0.9% each respectively. As for the government buildings, the figure tends to rise; it shows 32% of the 108 buildings monitored, and it is 6.3% when all of the buildings monitored are combined.

Necessary conditions when using building facilities

Given the study carried out, the overall conditions in using public building facilities are dire; only 23.4% of the buildings visited are physically accessible by the persons with disabilities.

In order to know whether needful conditions in utilization of building facilities exist for the people with disabilities, we need to look at these figures: out of 1194 single-story public buildings monitored only 231 had toilets exclusively meant for the people with disabilities; the rest did not. The issue is different in the two-storied buildings; only 89 out of 384 of these buildings had toilets for the mentioned people. And as the buildings get higher the number of toilets decrease; in the three-storied buildings, only 11 out of 90 of the buildings had the kind of toilets in question. The number to such toilets decreased in the four-storied buildings – only 5 out of 34 of the buildings offered such a facility.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The issue of physical accessibility to public buildings has been in the spotlight since 2001 in the country – that was after the establishment of institutions, unions and associations that dealt with serving the persons with disability. In other words, since some institutions were transferred from the neighboring countries into our country and started carrying out their programs in this respect. For the continuation of these activities, the government is also expected to act based on its responsibilities and its national and international commitments – that is to consider the subject matter of accessibility in all its aspects such as physical (ramps and lifts), transportation, working tools and learning aids (Brail language and body language) etc. and provide everyone from all social spectrums with the services. There is a need to mention a few major problems here:

Major Obstacles:

One of the major problems is the non-implementation of the guideline for the use of the facilities in and outside of buildings. The Ministry of Urban Development has prepared and sent the guideline to the relevant ministries and organs that are bound to carry out the same which in turn shall be monitored by the relevant ministries.

Furthermore, necessary measures should be taken in order to raise the awareness level of the public and the relevant government organs in connection with the issue of disability, and the regulations proposed by the Ministry of Urban Development should be followed by the ministries and especially by the municipalities in the center and in the provinces.

Along with other civil institutions, the unions and associations of the persons with disabilities ought to initiate an advocacy for physical accessibility and follow up the same as a right for the persons with disabilities.

The Ministry of Higher and Professional Education should integrate the subject matter of accessibility into the syllabus of engineering colleges and polytechnics so the problem of shortage in professionals is over. In addition, the universities should be accessible to various spectrums of persons with disabilities.

Recommendations:

1. Program the implementation of the Convention for the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities by the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Persons with Disabilities, the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Urban Development, the Ministry of Transportations etc.

2. Review and analyze the physical accessibility guideline, its ratification as a government regulation and establish a mechanism for its implementation under the leadership of the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Persons with Disabilities; another relative ministries and civil organizations dealing with persons with disabilities should also take part in the initiative.
3. Establish a professional structure at a government organ level in order to implement the physical accessibility that are there in the usual programs as well as those in the building and urban development programs in the country.
4. Raise the public awareness level via media and other means
5. Conduct suitable awareness raising programs on the subject matter of disability (regulation and guidelines) for the relevant government and private authorities
6. Integrate the subject matter of accessibility into the syllabus of higher education institutions for engineering and conduct short-term educational programs at the relevant ministries, government and non-government organs in order to train professional and expert personnel
7. Establish a specialized structure in the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Persons so as to attend effectively to the advocacy efforts, the coordination, the monitoring and the assessment of accessibility in cooperation by the civil society
8. Raise the quality level of the physical accessibility services that are offered by the institutions
9. Establish a factory that produces moving and helping facilities using local resources while being helped by international society. Even if built by the private sector, the factory should possibly employ persons with disabilities and the government should give subsidies to the owner for offering the goods at cheaper rates. The government could also buy the factory products at the market rate but set them for lower prices to the people with disabilities, or offer them for free.
10. Include all spectrums of disabilities in physical accessibility services while bearing in mind the accessibility guidelines for Afghanistan and their specific requirements
11. Include the subject matter of physical accessibility in all national development programs to be carried out by the ministries, government and independent organs

Attachments:

At this point the activities of the local institutions that have helped in making public buildings more accessible are highlighted. These institutions are AOAD, Office of Mine Affected Afghan, AABRA and the Social Center for Persons with Disabilities. As for the international institutions, the International Committee of Red Cross, Swedish Committee for Afghanistan and Handicap International could be named. And CPE Office was introduced as one of the organizations that support the local institutions.

The following table shows the list of ramps and toilets that have been built or renovated during the past three years to serve the specific purpose.

Name of Institute	Total number of ramps made	Province-wise number of ramps built in schools and other public buildings	Province-wise number of toilets renovated or made to serve the purpose
AOAD	396 ramps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kabul: 124 rams (51 schools) • Laghman: 22 ramps (9 schools) • Nangarhar: 92 ramps (6 schools) • Maidan Wardak: 30 ramps (11 schools) • Logar: 100 ramps (50 schools) • Uruzgan: 20 rams (8 schools) 	
AABRA	164 ramps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Esstern Zone: 30 ramps (8 schools) • Kandahar: 53 ramps (50 schools) • Kapisa: 20 ramps (4 schools) • Panjsher: 10 ramps (5 schools) • Parwan: 20 ramps (4 schools) • Takhar: 20 ramps (10 schools) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paktia: 3 toilets
ALSO	180 ramps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kabul: 114 ramps • Mazar-e-Sharif: 23 ramps • Herat: 28 ramps • Bamyán: 30 ramps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kabul: 5 ramps • Mazar-e-Sharif: 6 toilets • Heart: 6 toilets
CCD	11 ramps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kabul: 11 ramps in schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kabul: 17 toilets in schools
HANDICAP International	104 ramps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heart: 49 ramps • Kabul and Kandahar: 55 ramps 	10 toilets
Swedish Committee for Afghanistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active in 17 provinces • 200 ramps in schools • 100 ramps in hospitals and clinics • 700 ramps for toilets 		

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Insert pics

Conclusions and Recommendations

It can be seen from the foregoing that the issue of physical accessibility to public places was raised in post-2001 years after the establishment of institutions for delivering services for persons with disabilities, unions and associations of persons with disabilities and councils and advocacy committees for the realisation of the human rights of persons with disabilities and the transfer of organisations from neighbouring countries to Afghanistan and it was implemented by these institutions and it is expected that in order to sustain these activities, the Government also acts in accordance with its national and international obligations and commitments, considers the issue of access in all its dimensions including physical accessibility (wheelchair ramps, elevators), transportation, working tools and educational means (Braille language and sign language) and etc and paves the way for the delivery of services for all segments of the population on an equal footing. It is necessary here to refer to several major problems.

Major Problems

One of the major problems is the lack of implementation of the guidelines on facilitation for use by persons with disabilities inside and outside premises that has been developed by the Ministry of Urban Development and distributed for the relevant ministries and institutions. The guidelines should be implemented by the relevant organizations and the relevant ministry should monitor the implementation process.

Appropriate measures should also be taken to raise the awareness of people and relevant government officials about the issue of disability and the regulations adopted by the Ministry of Urban Development should be observed by ministries and particularly by municipalities in the capital and provinces.

In co-operation with other civil society organisations, unions and associations of persons with disabilities should advocate and follow up physical accessibility as a right of persons with disabilities.

The Ministry of Higher Education should incorporate the topic of access into the curricula of engineering faculties and polytechnic so as to address the problem of inadequate expertise in the relevant authorities and universities should also be made accessible for various categories of persons with disabilities.

Recommendations

1. Afghanistan's signature of and accession to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at the international level by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Review and study of the guideline on physical accessibility and its ratification as a governmental regulation and the creation of a mechanism for its implementation led by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled with input and participation from the relevant ministries and civil society organizations of persons with disabilities.

2. The establishment of a professional structure at the level of relevant governmental institutions for the implementation of issues related to physical accessibility in ordinary and developmental construction and urban development programmes in the country.
3. Raising public awareness through different methods (media and other measures).
4. Holding appropriate awareness-raising events for relevant governmental and private-sector officials about disability-related issues (existing regulations and guidelines).
5. Incorporating a physical accessibility topic into the curricula of higher education institutes that specialize in construction and holding short-term training programs to train professionals through the relevant ministry and other relevant governmental and non-governmental organisations.
6. The establishment of a professional structure in the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled to give effect to advocacy efforts, co-ordination, monitoring and evaluation of disability issues (physical accessibility) in co-operation with civil society.
7. Enhancing the quality of physical accessibility standards by providing agencies.
8. The establishment of a factory to produce mobility and assistive tools by using domestic revenues and with the support of the international community. If the factory is to be built by the private sector, persons with disabilities should be employed as its workers to the maximum extent possible and the Government should subsidise the owner of the factory for the delivery of products at a cheap rate. Or the Government purchases the products of the factory at an appropriate free-market rate from the factory and sells them to persons with disabilities at a rate cheaper than the market rate or provides them gratis for persons with disabilities.
9. Including all different sectors of persons with disabilities in the delivery of physical accessibility services, taking into account the guideline on physical accessibility for Afghanistan and their special needs.
10. Incorporating the issue of physical accessibility services in all national development programmes of ministries, independent and governmental institutions, corporations and enterprises.

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