ACCESSIBILITY OF INTERNATIONAL WEBPAGES:A PRELIMINARY SURVEY

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Abstract:

The paper surveys the extent to which the international webpage's applied accessibility statements. Methodology includes thirty one international websites have been evaluated for 17 accessibility features prescribed in the accessibility statement by the Directorate of Standardization testing and quality certification (STQC) along with five accessibility features prescribed byWeb content accessibility guidelines (WCAG).The average score obtained was seven. Top scorers were the Ministry of Road and Transport (21), National institute for Empowerment of Person with Multiple Disabilities (16) and Yahoo webpage (12) Bottom scorers were Wikipedia (7), American Speech and Hearing Association (8), Meccawebpage (8) Massachusetts university (6) and International telecommunication union, toolkit for Disables (6).The features which are significantly applied (p<0.05) are Headings, Subheadings, Titles, Tooltip, Connection with social networking and Videos. The feature which were not significantly used by the websites are Skip to main content, icons, Accessibility features, Adjust contrast scheme and Increase text spacing other Twelve features were used in consistently. Hence the accessibility statements which enable merging the digital divide are yet to be appreciated internationally.

Keywords:
International Websites, Accessibility Statement, STQC, Disabilities, WCAG.

1. INTRODUCTION:

The mouse has divided the world in to two,a group which can access the world through the internet and other which cannot. This is referred to as digital divide and is of major concern (DiMaggio et al. 2004;Hargittai 2003; Lenhart et al. 2003; Norris 2001; van Dijk 2005; Warschauer 2003).Therecent generation, born between 1980 to 1990 caused the divide at home, in public places and at home. Asthey grew up with the development of computers, referred to as "generation Y"(Generation Y, 2013). The generation Y could use the latest machines and access the web with an unprecedented efficiency as compared to the earlier generations and have become an issue of concern. Tobridge the gap the machines need to be made "easy to use" or accessible. Lack of accessibility of information from the web impedes work for many.
Effective dissemination and accessibility of information by one and all is one of the major goal which every government and governance is targeting hard to achieve. It's further important as,

accessibility to information is a humanrightissue. It has picked up momentum internationally and in India after the implementation of the Right To information Act passed by the government of India in year 2005(Right to Information, 2005). This challenge of receiving and disseminatinginformation seemed to have had a solution with the emergence of the facility to post information through the internet. However the solution came up with a new challenge referred to as "digital divide".To understand the digital divide and how it affects participation of a person in his society, the International classification of health (ICF) classification prescribed by the WHO in 2001is of help. The ICF, 2001 tries elaborating upon how anindividual's capability to be an active and contributing member of a society is impeded by various environmentalfactors and personal
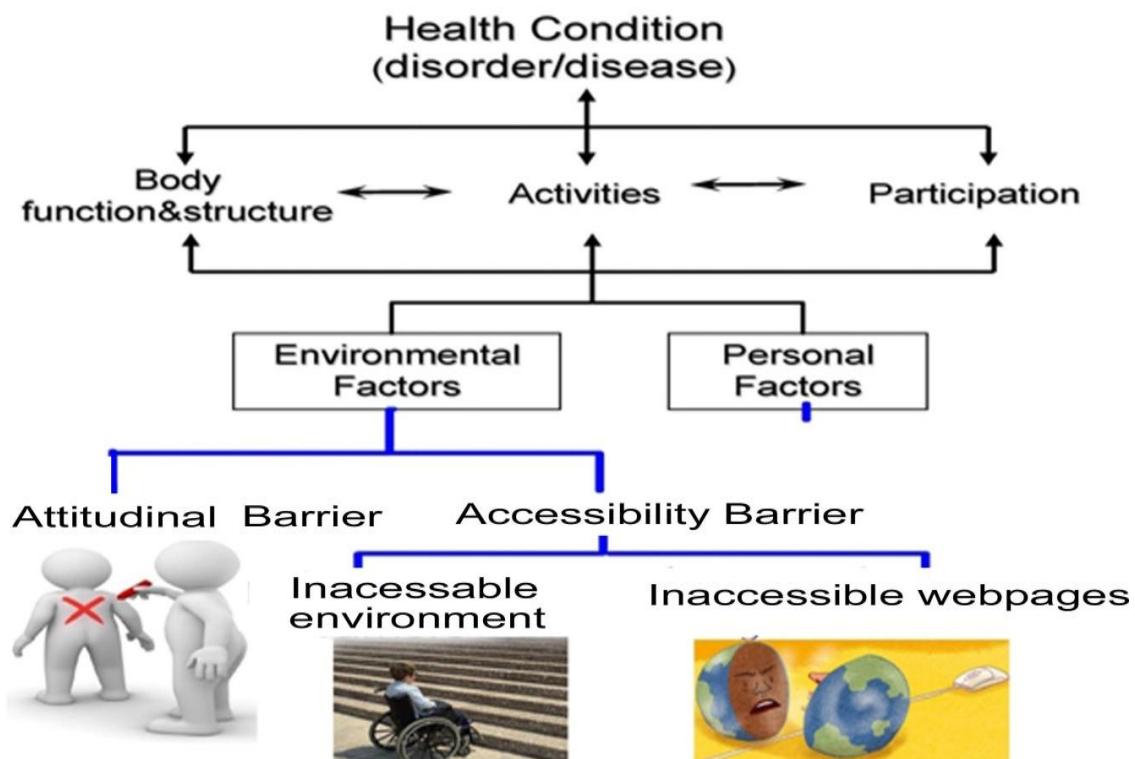

Figure 1: Interaction between the various components of ICF (WHO, 2001) and elaboration of the environmental factors which impede person s participation.

The ICF provides appropriate instrument for the implementation of stated international human rights mandates as well as national legislations (WHO, 2001). ICF is a classification of health and health-related domains which includes disabilities/ persons with disabilities. These domains are classified from body, individual and societal perspectives by means of two lists: a list of body

functions and structure, and a list of domains of activity and participation. Since an individual's functioning and disability occurs in a context, the ICF also includes a list of environmental factors .The environmental factors and their influence on the social participation of the person. Environmental factors can be further classified as attitudinal barriers i.e. negative attitudes of the people in the society who feel that a person with disability "cannot" do things and architectural barriers which includes structural barriers and in accessible information from print and electronic media including the web pages (Fig 1).

In India, the charm of government jobs faded and the economic divide within the middle class increased with the emergence of the highly paying software industry which offered high salary package and air conditioner work set up. The nature of work in the software industry unlike the previous sector was in and around computers.The success in terms of using computers and the web governed in the software industry achieve vocational success. The proficiency with which the "generation Y" uses the computers and web sites gives them a clear cut edge above the other generation. The only solution is to merge the divide is to make the web accessible for the earlier generation. This paper aims to discover ways in which the web can be made accessible to one and all universally.

Accessibility is the degree to which a product, device, service, or environment is available to as many people as possible. Accessibility is not to be confused with usability, which is the extent to which a product (such as a device, service, or environment) can be used by specified users to achieve specified goals with effectiveness, efficiency and satisfaction in a specified context of use.Accessibility can be viewed as the "ability to access" and benefit from some system or entity. The concept is needed for one and all universally but often focuses on people with disabilities or special needs and their right of access, enabling the use of technology.

Accessibility is of universal concern it needs to be understood and implemented in a broader way. The universal design on web was proposed internationally first by UNESCO, WHO followed by the University of Washington in USA (University of Washington, 2001). Since then several organisations have been working on promoting accessibility on web. The leading organisations include Standardization Testing and Quality Certification (STQC)in India under the Ministry of Communication Information Technologyin India since, 1980 and the University of Washington. The web content accessibility guidelines (WCAG, 2008), The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) develops and maintains the protocols to promote universal access. Tim Berners-Lee, Director of the W3C believes: The power of the web is in its universality. Access by everyone regardless of disability is an essential aspect." (WCAG, 2008) The aim of the study is to evaluatethe extent to which the international webpage's applied accessibility statements as prescribed by the STQC and WCAG.

2. METHODOLOGY

Thirty oneInternational websites were selected based uponon purposive sampling with the perspectives of PublicHealth, Social responsibility, Wealth, Education, Spirituality, Popularity,

Defence,populationand Institutes working for the persons with disabilities(Appendix, A).The 17 STQC accessibility features (accessibility statement, 2008) and additional five accessibility features from WCAG (2008) were adapted to rate the accessibility of the international websites.

2.1. TOOL

The study was conducted by adopting the STQC Accessibility (seventeen accessibility features) along with WCAG guidelines (Five accessibility features) the same which were recommended by the authors to develop a checklist. The STQC awarded websites were reviewed to appreciate the parameters(Appendix, B)The Twenty-two itemed checklist having 17 STQC and WCAG guidelines were used to measure the accessibility features applied on the web. The mentioned webpages were rated using the developed tool. The presence of the accessibility features on the web page was marked byone (1) and the absence of it was rated as zero (0). The STQC awarded websites were reviewed to ensure the parameters.

2.2. PROCEDURE

The web was searched for the accessibility feature guidelines and organisation involved in formulating or implementing it. A review of the STQC accessibility statement was done along with a review of few internationally prescribed guidelines from WCAG. The details of the guidelines were appreciated by reviewing three websites (AYJNIHH, NIEPMD, National Security Depository limited, Central depository (I) limited) which had received STQC awards through government of India since the year of 2010 by a National award for being accessible websites and had STQC certifications.Fewpopular international websites were reviewed to identify the way in which accessibility features are implemented on the webpages. The webpages are like Yahoo, Google, Wikipedia, Face book .Two research scholars and the Head of the department of computer applications from Dr. M.G.R educational research institute, Chennai were consulted about the definitions and applications of accessibility before finalizing the check list and the ratings.

A checklist was prepared (Appendix, B) and each webpage were evaluated for the presence and absence of the accessibility statement (features). The presence of the features was coded as 1 (one), while the absence of the feature coded as 0 (zero). The highest possiblescore is 22. A descriptive statistics and a Chi square test was done to Identify features which were significantly present or absent using SPSS version 16 software.

3. RESULTS

The application of the accessibility features by thirtyone InternationalWebpageswere surveyedand rated based upon the developed checklist (Appendix, B). The scores obtained by each website are depicted in figure 1. The maximum numbers of accessibility features were incorporated in Ministry of Road Transport India (21) followedby National Institute for Empowerment of Person with Multiple Disability (16) and Yahoo Webpage (12). The minimum

accessibility features were incorporated in Wikipedia (7), American speech and hearing association (8) and Mecca website (8) andMassachusettsUniversity (6).An averageten accessibility features were impeded in those Webpages.Thirty internationalwebsites and the numbers of accessibility features put to use in them are depicted in the Fig. 2.
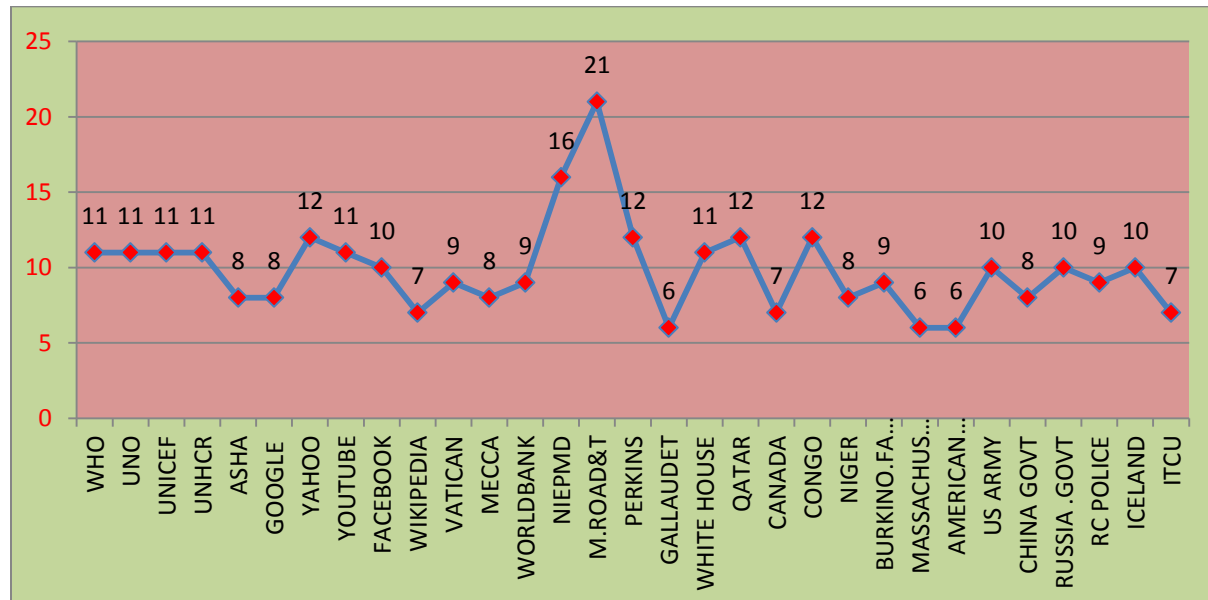

Figure 2: Thirty one International websites and the number of accessibility   features put to use in them.

Figure: 2 Describe the Accessibility features incorporated in the above thirty international websites.   The maximum number of Accessibility feature are maintained by the Ministry of Road transport India, following that National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disability, Yahoo webpage, UNO, UNICEF,UNHCR and the least features were incorporated in Wikipedia, American speech and hearing association ,Mecca and Massachusetts University.

A chi square was done to identify features which were used significantly or were neglected. The features significantly used features are Headings, Sub headings, Titles, connection with social networking, option to change the language, Tooltip option and Videos. The significantly not presented ($p<0.05$) features are iconic presentation, accessibility options like ,changing the size of the text, changing the colour of the text, adjust contrast scheme, , identification of file type & size, Increase text spacing and access of screen reader. Significantly presented features keyboard support, consistence navigation mechanism, Videos, screen saver option and tooltip. (Figure 3).
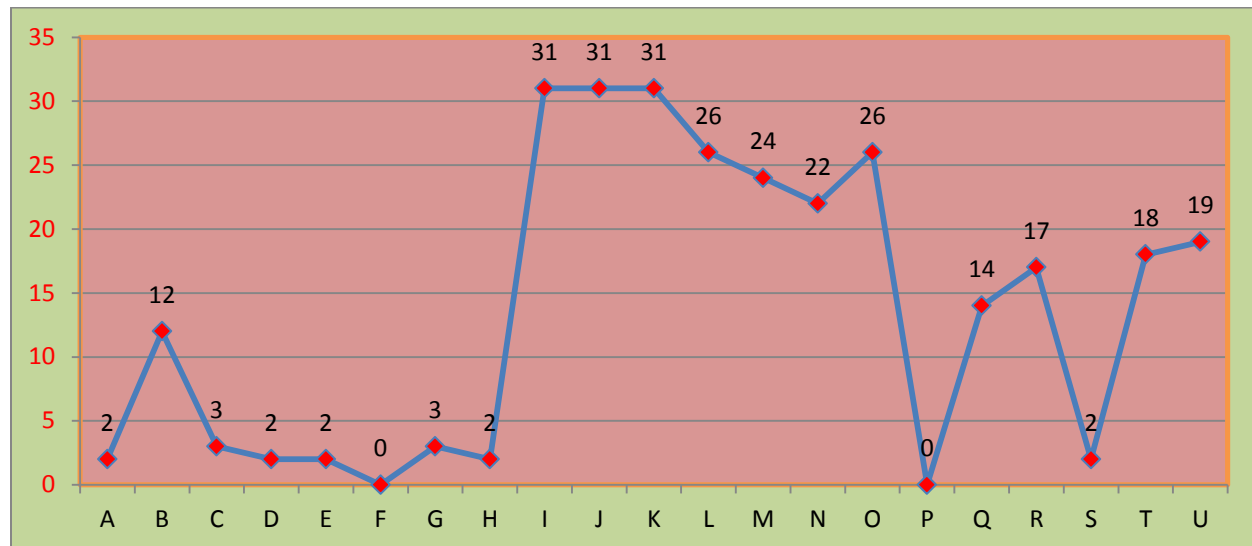
Figure 3: Indicates the Accessibility Options of WebPages been incorporated in the websites specifically. The figure shows the maximum possible score for the every 10 options of STQC features.**A-**Refers to skip to main content, **B**-Icons**, C**-Accessibility features, **D**-Change text size, **E**-Change colour of text, **F**-Increase text spacing, **G**-Identification of file type, **H**-Icons for different types of file **I**-, Heading, **J**-Sub heading**, K**-Title, **L-**Alternate text, **M**-Availability of tooltip, **N**-Consistent navigation mechanism, **O**-Keyboard support, **P**-Adjust contrast scheme , **Q**-Contents in own language, **R**-Screen saver option, **S**-Screen reader access, **T**-Visual screening(Videos), **U**-Connectivity with social networking's.

A to P – Accessibility features from STQC

Q to U - Accessibility features prescribed by WCAG guidelines.

4. DISCUSSION

The two top scores of the survey and had more than60% 0f the features implemented and their Webpages were Ministry of road and Transport India and National Institute for Empowerment of Person with Multiple Disability. Both of the Webpages are government of India funded Webpages at the same none of the private funded webpages including the very popular webpage and search engines like Yahoo, Google, face book, YouTube UNO, UNICEF, UNHCR,ASHA and Wikipedia were implemented less than 60% of the accessibility features. This reflects an attitudinal barrier or ignorance on the Accessibility features and the need for them implement.

The majority of the international websites were yet not maintained many of the accessibility features that has been recommended by WCAG guidelines. There is no option for skip to main content or skip to navigation option facilities were available in any of the international website that has been reviewed except Ministry of Road and Transport of India and National Institute for

Empowerment of Person with Multiple disability (Figure 1). The only option that the international websites were maintained similarly is connection with social networking's it is not yet implemented strongly in some other national websites in India but the need is more and it is increased quite a bit now a days because of sharing the materials and some information through the social medias. The most important feature access of screen reader is not yet properly implemented by any of the international websites which considered ton the most accessible feature for the people with visual impairment.

Disability rights promotion international website, has given some short cut keys to use the accessibility feature that has been incorporated in their own website. The International websites somewhere like Google and yahoo Webpages were considered to be search engines they have given language options to open up any Webpages but there is no any other accessibility options were incorporated in this world wide famous search engine websites. Some websites like Vatican and Wikipedia were giving option to open up the website which the user wishes to open it. Most of the websites working for community development and developmental programs were also having the options to read the web content in their users own language but the languages are specific and approved by united nations as certified language . If the international website tries to follow up the WCAG guidelines or its well-developed version like W3C means it will be help the next generation of people especially to the people with disability. The where ever the videos also presented in some websites like United nations organization and united nations High commission for refugees, it was not strongly implemented in some other websites. For the most important the option to increase spacing between the words (Text spacing) option is not implemented in any of the international websites that has been surveyed.

The Recommendations of WCAG and some of the special option for Disabled people were not implemented in most any of the international websites, for example the recommendation of implementing the sign language videos in the websites were not implemented in any of the websites that we have reviewed.

Accessibility is strongly related to universal design when the approach involves "direct access." This is about making things accessible to all people (whether they have a disability or not). An alternative is to provide "indirect access" by having the entity support the use of a person's assistive technology to achieve access. For example, computer screen readers. (Wikipedia, 2013).There are two sides of the coin when it comes to helping people with disabilities get online: ensuring that people with disabilities have access to technologies that can help them use the web, and that web pages work with those technologies. (Hollier Scott, 2012). The "quantity" of information on a webpage is important but more important is it's "quality" and its "accessibility" which matters. Quality of webpage information can be rated under three headings firstly, the content based upon a need identification of the target audiences, the clarity with which the home page is displayed and thirdly how successfully can the target user reach/access the desired information.

The STQC Directorate in India has been providing award to the organisations and institutions maintaining their websites with some accessible features that they have mentioned in their accessibility statement. The features incorporated in accessibility statement given by the directorate of STQC are based on internationally accepted standards such as ISO, and Web Content accessibility Guidelines (WCAG, 2008) of the World web Consortium (W3C), as adapted in the Indian Context. However a practice is found, very few professionals were already known the accessibility statement and not many WebPages including the STQC certified WebPages implemented the same. The aim of the study is to evaluate and analyse the Standard and accessibility of the international WebPages make use of the accessibility statements in their web design and to identify then most frequently to the least frequently used feature.

5. CONCLUSION

Accessibility statements which enable merging the digital divide are yet to be appreciated internationally. Accessibility on the webpages is still a low prior issue which is evident from the application of the survey shows that most of the international websites were not applied the accessibility features.

There is a need to apply accessibility features on the webpage to facilitate accessibility and the promote accessibility features on their webpage for universal accessibility without any barriers.

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APPENDIX A

Sampled Webpages and reason for selection:

Sl No.	International WebPages	Reason for selection
1	World Health Organisation	The World Health Organization (WHO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN) that is concerned with international public health.
		URL: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Health_Organization
2	United nations organisations	an international organization whose stated aims include promoting and facilitating cooperation in international law, international security, economic development, social progress, human rights, civil rights, civil liberties, political freedoms, democracy, and the achievement of lasting world peace.
		URL: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations
3	United nations International Children educational fund	Provides long term humanitarian and developmental assistance to children and mothers in developing countries.
		URL: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UNICEF

4	United nations high Commission for Refugees	United Nations agency mandated to protect and support refugees at the request of a government or the UN itself and assists in their voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement to a third country
	URL: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_High_Commissioner_for_Refugees	
5	American Speech and Hearing Association	Professional association for speech–language pathologists, audiologists, and speech, language, and hearing scientists who worked towards improving communication skills in the United States and internationally.
	URL:http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Speech%E2%80%93Language%E2%80%93Hearing_Association	
6	Google	An American multinational corporation specializing in Internet-related services and products. These include search, cloud computing,software and online advertising technologies. Most of its profits are derived from Advertisement Words
	URL: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Google	
7	Yahoo	It is one of the most popular sites in the United States. According to news sources, roughly 700 million people visit Yahoo! websites every month. Yahoo! itself claims it attracts "more than half a billion consumers every month in more than 30 languages."
	URL: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yahoo!	
8	YouTube	YouTube is a video-sharing website, which users can upload, view and share videos. Of user-generated video content, including

		movie clips, TV clips, and music videos, as well as amateur content such as video blogging, short original videos, and educational videos.
		URL: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/YouTube
9	Face book	Facebook is an online social networking service
		URL: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Facebook
10	Wikipedia	Collaboratively edited, multilingual, free Internet encyclopaedia Almost all of its articles can be edited by anyone having access to the site. It is the largest and most popular general reference work on the Internet,
		URL: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia
11	Vatican	The Holy See, the central governing body of the Catholic Church and sovereign entity recognized by international law, consisting of the Pope and the Roman Curia. The Vatican can also be referred to as "The Holy city". an smallest country in the world 39% of the world is Christians.
		URL: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vatican
12	Mecca	Makkah, is a city in the Hejazalthough visitors more than triple this number every year during Hajjperiod held in the twelfth Muslim lunar month of Dhu al-Hijjah.A Spiritual city for 13% Muslims populationand aim to visit the city in their life

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	URL: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mecca	
13	World bank	The World Bank is an international financial institution that provides loans to developing countries for capital programs. The World Bank's official goal is the reduction of poverty
	URL: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_bank	
14	National Institute for person with Multiple Disabilities	It is the latest National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities or NIEPMD is established by Government of India under the aegis of Department of Disability Affairs, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment at Chennai for providing various services to persons with multiple disabilities.
	URL: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NIEPMD	
15	Ministry of Road and Transport India	The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, a branch of the Government of India, is the apex body for formulation and administration of the rules, regulations and laws relating to road transport, national highways and transport research, in order to increase the mobility and efficiency of the road transport system in India.
	URL:http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ministry_of_Road_Transport_and_Highways_(India)	
16	Perkins Blind school	Perkins School for the Blind, in Watertown, Massachusetts, is the oldest school for the blind in the United States

	URL: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perkins_School_for_the_Blind	
17	Gallaudet University(AS LP Studies)	Gallaudet University is a federally chartered university for the education of the deaf and It was the first school for the advanced education of the deaf and hard of hearing in the world, and is still the only higher education institution in which all programs and services are specifically designed to accommodate deaf and hard of hearing students.
	URL:http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gallaudet_University	
18	White House	The White House is the official residence and principal workplace of the President of the United States,
	URL:http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_house	
19	Qatar	Richest country of world
	URL:http://www.clicktop10.com/2013/05/top-10-richest-countries-in-the-world-in-2013/	
20	Canada	Highest educated population country
	URL:http://finance.yahoo.com/news/the-10-most-educated-countries-in-the-world.html	
21	Congo	The Democratic Republic of the Congo has become the poorest country in the world as of 2010.

	URL:http://www.therichest.com/world/poorest-countries-in-the-world/	
22	Niger	Highest Adult illiteracy rate84.3%
	URL:http://www.whichcountry.co/top-10-countries-with-highest-illiteracy-rate-in-the-world/	
23	Burkino.Faso	World unhealthiest country
	URL:http://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/health-fitness/revealed-the-top-ten-healthiest-and-unhealthiest-countries/story-fneuz9ev-1226536906813	
24	Massachusetts University	No1 university in the world
	URL:http://www.usnews.com/education/worlds-best-universities-rankings/top-400-universities-in-the-world	
25	American Embassy school	No.1 school in the world located at New Delhi
	URL:http://www.insignia-lb.com/2008/05/20/schools/	
26	US Army	Most Powerful army in the world
	URL:http://www.businessinsider.com/10-most-powerful-militaries-in-the-world-2013-6?op=1	

27	Government of China	Highest populated country
	URL: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_population	
28	Government of Russia	Largest country in the world land.(Area)
	URL:http://www.mapsofworld.com/world-top-ten/world-top-ten-largest-countries-in-area-map.html	
29	Royal Canadian police	No 1 Intelligence police forces in the world
	Ref:http://www.listoffive.com/five-best-police-forces-in-the-world/	
30	Iceland	Most Peaceful country in the world
	Ref:	
	http://www.gfmag.com/tools/global-database/ne-data/11941-most-peaceful-countries.ht	
31	ITCU	E accessibility toolkit policy for pwds
	URL: http://www.e-accessibilitytoolkit.org/	

APPENDIX B

The checklist to evaluate web pages in terms of accessibility

Sl. No	Accessibility Statement/ Features	Prescribed by	Present (1)/ Absent (0)
1	Skip to main content	STQC	
2	Icons	STQC	
3	Percentage of icons presented in webpage	STQC	
4	Accessibility options	STQC	
5	Size of the text	STQC	
6	colour scheme	STQC	
7	Increase The text Space	STQC	
8	Identification of file type &size	STQC	
9	Icons for Different Types of Files	STQC	
10	Main Headings	STQC	
11	Sub Headings	STQC	
12	Titles	STQC	
13	Alternate text	STQC	
14	Availability of tool tip (Mouse)	STQC	
15	Consistent navigation mechanism	STQC	
16	Keyboard support (Shift+ Tab)	STQC	
17	Adjust contrast scheme	STQC	
18	Contents in Indian language	WCAG	

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19	Screen saver option	WCAG	
20	Access of screen Reader	WCAG	
21	Visual Screening(any Videos)	WCAG	
22	Availability of connections with social Networks	WCAG	
	TOTAL		

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A Model Web Page

Adjust contrast scheme

Accessibility features

Skip to main content

Skip to main content   Text Size: A– A A+   Contrast Scheme: A A A A   Screen Reader
Access

Screen reader access

Search:

Text size option

National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities
(Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Govt. of India)

Icons

राष्ट्रीय बहुविध व्यक्ति अधिकारिता संस्थान
(सामाजिक न्याय और अधिकारिता मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार)

Alternate text

HOME   ABOUT US   SERVICES   DEPARTMENT   COURSES   NEWS & EVENTS   CONTACT US

ABOUT MULTIPLE DISABILITIES

When a child has several different disabilities we say, that he/she has multiple disabilities. For example, a child may have difficulties in learning, along with controlling her movements and/or with hearing and vision. The effect of multiple disability can be more than the combination of two individual disabilities.

A child who is multiple disabled help as early as possible helped to achieve her potential, and so that her disabilities will not become worse.

More on multiple disabilities >>

WHAT'S NEW

Tender Notice

• Tender Notice - Server(17 KB)

Conference

• International Conference on Autism 2013

Research

• Multiple Disabilities - Database Questionnaire (31.9 KB)

Awards

• National Award - Best Accessible Website for Persons with Disabilities the year 2011 (516 KB)

More on What's New

Identification of file size & type

Screen saver option

Start   Stop

Headings

National Institute for empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities (NIEPMD) established in the year 2005, on East Coast Road, Muttukadu, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, (about 30 km from Chennai Central railway station, Mofussil bus terminus and airport) Under the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Govt. of India, to serve as a national resource center for empowerment of persons with Multiple Disabilities such as those with two or more disabilities in a person. The Disabilities enumerated as per PWD (1995) Act, are Low Vision, Blindness, Locomotor Disability, Hearing Impairment, Mental Retardation, Mental Illness, Leprosy Cured Persons and as per The National Trust (1999) Act, are Cerebral Palsy and Autism.

OBJECTIVES

• To undertake development of human resources for management, training rehabilitation employment and social development of persons with Multiple Disabilities.
• To promote and conduct research in all areas relating to Multiple Disabilities
• To develop Transdisciplinary models and strategies for social rehabilitation and to meet the needs of diverse groups of people with Multiple Disabilities.
• To undertake services and out reach programs for the persons with Multiple Disabilities.

VISION

The Persons with Multiple Disabilities have equal rights to lead a better quality of life. This may be enabled with committed professionalism, accessible environment, equal opportunities, positive attitudes and appropriate, affordable, acceptable and available technological interventions.

Alternate text

MISSION

To provide need based comprehensive rehabilitation through appropriate empowerment of persons with Multiple Disabilities and their families and by substantiating based research and development of human resources.

Sub headings

VALUE STATEMENT

Promoting quality of life for persons with Multiple Disabilities through equal participation of clients, families, professionals and community agencies.

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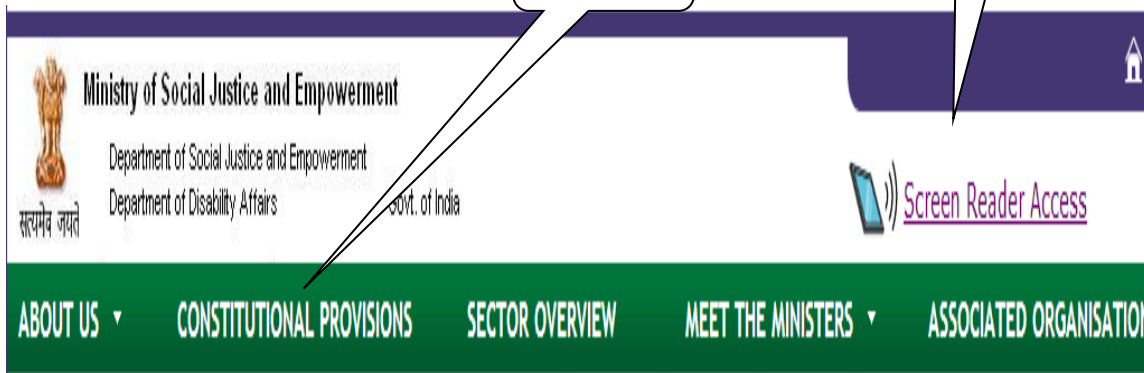
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