# ICT and Disability

## What is the issue?

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- Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have the potential to significantly impact the lives of 8-10% of India's population lives with disabilities.
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- It will facilitate access of services available to them and allowing them to handle a wide range of activities independently, enhancing their social, cultural, political and economic participation.
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- So ICT must be made accessible to everyone.
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## What India has done till now?

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- **Accessible India Campaign** - It aims at achieving universal accessibility for all citizens and creating an enabling and barrier-free environment.
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- **CRPD -** India was one of the first countries to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
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- **Disabilities Bill -** The recently passed Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 mandates adherence to standards of accessibility, transportation, information and communications, including appropriate technologies and systems, and other facilities and services provided to the public in urban and rural areas.
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- The Act also mandates **incorporation of Universal Design principles** while designing new infrastructure, electronic and digital media, consumer goods and services.
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- It also sets **timelines** to ensure implementation of the above and punitive action in the event of non-compliance.
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## How important is Accesibility?

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- Accessibility would help achieve the combined goal of creating an inclusive society that will allow for a better quality of life for all citizens, including persons with disabilities.
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- Poor accessibility has **led to social exclusion** of people with disabilities, aggravating the negative impact of the existing digital divide.
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- Beyond the social implications, accessibility makes for **business and economic sense** too. Exclusion of persons with disabilities has huge economic implications. UN agencies put this cost at around 7% of national GDP.
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- Accessible services and business premises can broaden **the customer base.**
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- Recent research pegged the market size of different products needed by persons with disabilities in India at a whopping Rs. 4,500 crore.
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## What India should do?

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- The need is for representation of persons with disabilities in all ministries and key missions, commissions and committees to advise and ensure inclusion in all policies and programmes.
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- The government’s procurement policy must mandate accessibility as a key criterion.
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- Adherence to the **Web Content Accessibility Guidelines** should be made mandatory while developing websites and mobile applications.

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- The Smart Cities Mission leads to the convergence of other ongoing government programmes like Make In India, Digital India, AMRUT, etc., but the Accessible India Campaign does not even find a mention.
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- This happened even as many as 39 cities out of the 50 cities of the Accessible India Campaign are also among the shortlisted Smart Cities.
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- So, the synergy between various arms of the government is very important.
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**Source: The Hindu**

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