

NEWS RELEASE

National Institute for Urban Affairs and World Enabled to Expand Inclusion and Accessibility in Indian Cities

National Institute for Urban Affairs and WORLD ENABLED announce a new cooperation agreement to advance the UN Sustainable Development Goals' local inclusion targets.

New Delhi, India (14 October 2020) – Nearly 54% of all people on earth live in cities. More than 1 million people per week move into urban areas. By 2045, the world's urban population will increase by 1.5 times to 6 billion. Asia is going through a historic demographic transformation from a rural society to an urban society that is far larger than any transformation seen in the past, in any other part of the globe. By 2025, the majority of Asia's population will be urban. Cities are also both centres of prosperity and even exclusion. Nearly 25% of people living in cities worldwide experience barriers on account of age or disability.

In India, this is especially important where nearly 400 million people live in cities or urban areas and this number is estimated to reach 875 million by 2050. They experience lower rates of health, education, and employment compared to their non-disabled peers. These trends create challenges and present opportunities to create a more equitable urban habitat for all society sections. Such an approach will require organizations like the National Institute for Urban Affairs (NIUA), the apex think tank for the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs of the Government of India (GoI), and World Enabled

This agreement, in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), formalizes the mutual interaction between the NIUA and the WE at a strategic and working level, focusing on the development of inclusive standards, frameworks, facilitate knowledge exchange and undertake capacity development of key local and global stakeholders. The agreement will also support research and help document good-practices on inclusive and accessible pandemic responses in a diverse set of Indian cities. The partnership will kick-off with webinars organized on relevant topics and a survey to assess acceptable practices and challenges that urban leaders have faced before and during their pandemic response. The research and focus groups will help inform investments and capacity-building efforts.

On this occasion Mr. Hitesh Vaidya, Director, NIUA said that "The collaborative endeavour between NIUA and World Enabled promises to make a substantial impact and improve the lives of persons with disabilities in India, by accelerating efforts in building accessible, safe and inclusive smart cities and leveraging their technical capacities in developing and sharing knowledge and training resources."

This partnership strategically facilitates inclusive development and promotes accessibility in Indian cities. Dr. Victor Santiago Pineda, President of World Enabled adds that "NIUA is a leader in driving forth the world's most significant urban transformation. World Enabled will support NIUA in ensuring that the urban transformation is responsive to the needs of older persons and persons with disabilities supporting Indian cities with their progressive realization of the inclusion targets of the SDGs."

This new partnership, including a webinar co-hosted with NIUA, builds on both an existing program, 'Building Accessible, Safe & Inclusive Indian Cities' (BASIIC), at NIUA supported by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCDO) of the UK Government and on the significant efforts by World Enabled and its global partners to define the challenges and opportunities that the contemporary and future cities present to persons with disabilities.

"There is a need for mainstream universal access across the project lifecycle, especially in urban development projects across Indian cities. We are delighted to help ensure that urban policies and programs are inclusive and accessible for persons with disabilities, older persons, and children. We look forward to supporting the needs of NIUA and better help address the needs of various city leaders, Development Authorities, and Urban Local Bodies across India," **said Mr. Parul Sharma, Country Program Manager (India), World Enabled.**

The two organizations will jointly leverage their respective programs, global networks, research, and collaborative tools to support and advance their work in Indian cities.

"The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between NIUA and World Enabled advances cooperation on a series of emerging Urban Planning frameworks, research, data, tools, initiatives, and strategies to promote and develop inclusive urban environments across India. We are thrilled to collaborate with World Enabled, a leading international organization, to address this challenge. Their experience supporting governments to fully implement legal mandates to inclusion and diversity in urban development will help us better align program and institutional efforts to global norms", **said A N Nanda Kishore, Program Coordinator at NIUA.**

About World Enabled

World Enabled. World Enabled is a global education, communications, and strategic non-profit organization advocating for people with disabilities' rights and influencing inclusive urban planning policies. World Enabled has a highly skilled team for research, technical assistance, and capacity building initiatives with its partners; to realize a world without barriers where everyone and every organization works to unlock human potential. World Enabled work furthers innovative approaches to inclusive urban development. It helps build inclusive societies with its international partners where people with disabilities and older persons can fully develop their talents and reach their full potential. For more information, please visit our website <http://worldenabled.org/>

About NIUA

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

It has utilized its competencies in research, knowledge management, policy advocacy, and capacity building to address urban challenges and continuously strive to develop sustainable, inclusive, and productive urban ecosystems. It has emerged as a thought leader and knowledge hub for urban development in India. Indian and International organizations seek it out for collaborations and



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partnerships in India's urban transformation journey. NIUA is committed to aligning its efforts towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under all its initiatives and programs.

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