

Telecom Regulatory Authority of India

TRAI releases Consultation paper on “Making ICT Accessible for Persons with Disabilities”

New Delhi, 20th December, 2017: The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has today released a consultation paper on “Making ICT Accessible for Persons with Disabilities”

Over the last two decades, telecommunication and broadcasting services have become ubiquitous and now reach out to the most remote and underserved areas empowering millions of people. Telecommunication services also provide the basic underlying infrastructure for providing various services of the economy like banking, education, healthcare and public services etc. ICT is transforming the way agriculture, trade, commerce and transportation is done and future advances in ICTs including mobile broadband, the Internet of Things (IoT), robotics and artificial intelligence. 3-D printing will provide the tools for additional, unprecedented advances in healthcare, education, energy services, agriculture and environmental monitoring and protection.

2. However, Persons with disability (PwDs) are often not able to access these ICT services on account of lack of necessary accessibility features or unaffordable prices of the equipment or due to unavailability of required services to make them compatible for use by such persons. Since access to telecommunication and broadcasting services has become an essential component of economic growth and upliftment of people, it is important that necessary steps are taken to ensure that PwDs are able to access these services and the barriers that hinder this access are identified and removed. Also, for having an inclusive society in consonance with the basic principles of equality, freedom, justice and dignity of all enshrined in our constitution, it is important that benefits of technological advancement are made available to such persons.

3. In India the percentage of PwDs to the total population grew from 2.13% in 2001 to 2.21% in 2011 with 2.68 crore PwDs in the country. Programme such as “Digital India” aiming to bring ICTs to the doorstep of every citizen would be fully realized only when this important segment of our population is also benefitted from the digital transformation happening in the country.

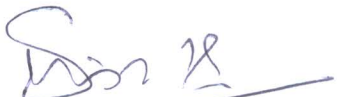
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4. Though governments, development partners, civil society and sector experts are working together to ensure protection of the rights of PwDs and in ICT field also there have been developments in aids and assistive devices and services for PwD, corresponding changes in services or content is yet to come in the country implying thereby that the benefits of ICT development have not reached fully to the PwDs. The Authority is therefore of the view that additional policy interventions need to be explored and implemented to address the unique challenges faced by the PwD community.

5. Keeping the above in view, the Authority has suo-motu initiated this consultation paper with the objective to identify key areas where policy interventions are needed to understand the barriers being faced by the PwDs in accessing the telecom and broadcasting services so that affirmative actions at policy level in the form of recommendations to the Government or formulation of regulation or advisory to equipment/service providers or a combination of these can be taken.

6. Written comments/inputs on the issues raised in the consultation paper are invited from the stakeholders by **22.01.2018** and counter comments by **05.02.2018**.

7. The comments and counter comments may be sent preferably in electronic form at 'advisorit@trai.gov.in. For any clarification **Shri Sanjeev Banzal, Advisor (CA & IT)**, TRAI may be contacted at telephone No. 23210990.


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Secretary I/C (TRAI)