TECHNOLOGY AND INCLUSION IN CITIES
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>> James: Good day, welcome. We're just letting all the participants in, we'll get started in just one moment.

Good day, everyone, welcome. We'll start in just one minute. Hello, I'm James Thurston vice president with an international organization called G3ict, the Global Initiative for Inclusive ICTs. In this conversation, this discussion today, this webinar, will be on technology and inclusion in cities.

We've been working with our partners, who you'll hear from in just a moment, for some time to plan this event and we're very excited to be here to have this conversation with all of you.

It's an important topic. All of our organizations are working, I think, really hard on making sure that as cities are using technology, they're thinking about people with disabilities. I know that many of the cities who are joining us are also thinking about all of their communities and making sure that people with disabilities are included in the services and activities that are supported with technology.

So, we'll talk a lot about that today.

Before we get started, what I'd like to do is have some of our colleagues give some welcoming remarks and provide some information on their activities.

Before we do, that I'd like to ask my colleague, Bela, to go through a set of good practices we have for running these discussions

and talk a little about the accessibility features that are available to participants today. Bela?

     >> Bela: Good morning and good afternoon, good evening to everyone. Thank you, James. Welcome to our Technology and Inclusion in Cities event. Let me share my screen.

     Can you see the slides?
     >> Yes.

     >> Bela: Good. I'd like to go over some of the session practices that we use today to make the experience more comprehensive and more attractive for everyone.

     So, the meeting is recorded and will be made valuable to the public. We are providing CART today, which is available in the English language. You can switch on the captions by clicking on CC button or show subtitles in the menu.

     Hindi language interpretation is also available at our session. You can choose interpretation button in the menu and then select the relevant language channel.

     And I'd like to add that captions are also available through the browser, and I will put the link in the chat, just in a couple of minutes.

     We are providing, also, English and Hindi sign language interpretation. You can pin the video of our interpreters by right clicking on them. We ask panelists to keep your microphone muted, unless you're speaking. And for attendees, we'd like you to use the Q&A section when putting questions for the panelists.

     As for the chat, please use it for some other comments and ideas and to put the question there, if you have some technical problems.

     We in G3ict team are monitoring the chat and will be there to solve any issues. We are planning a Q&A session towards the end of our event today. But please, feel free to post your questions to our panelists in the Q&A section during the discussion.

     And finally, if there are any questions left or any comments you'd like to share regarding our meeting today, please send them to info@smartcities4all.org. And the link will be posted in the chat towards the end of the session.

     That's it. Thank you.

     >> James: Fantastic, thank you so much, Bela. We try to make these discussions, these webinars as accessible as possible, thank you for sharing that information with everyone.

I mentioned, I'll be speaking with some of my colleagues later in the session, but I'd like to start with, with our partners, who really make this work possible and who are great collaborators in focusing on inclusion for people with disabilities in urban environments. And first, we're thrilled to have a partnership with the National Institute of Urban Affairs there in India.

This session is focused on India and cities in India. There are participants from other parts of the world as well.

Certainly, for our work in India, we're really thrilled to be working closely with NIUA on this issue of helping cities become both smarter and more inclusive as they're using technology and data.

And with that, Hitesh, I'd love to offer you some time to welcome our guests.

>> Hitesh: Good afternoon, James, good afternoon all the participants. My fellow panelists. Thank you for this discussion we're having. It's good afternoon in India, other parts of the world might be goodnight or good evening, welcome to this session, I think, you know, first of all, thank you to James and G3ict for really reaching out to have this session with us. And I, I think this topic, you know, technology and inclusion is a very relevant topic for cities because we all agree that digital technology is the way moving forward.

How do you mainstream technologies within the different stakeholders? And help people with different needs? I think that's a challenge which all of us are wrestling with. We use these terms, technology, inclusion, in very loose terms. What does it really mean? It's what is we need to really think through.

Sometimes, when we use these terms, the language which we talk, as professionals and the language which cities understand, there are two different languages.

The idea which we discussed with James and all things, let's start talking from, bring this discussion from technologies and inclusion, from 40,000 feet height to 1,000 feet, at the ground level.

So, the cities we are really taking up these issues that cities which are challenging, taking a lot of strides to, you know, resolve these issues of inclusion and technology.

They are not two-sided. We're not talking about more silos. We're talking about a convergence of silos. How this convergence of silos can happen, that's a broad objective of this, of this webinar, the cities of discussion, which we will be doing a lot of them over a period of time.

So, that idea is how do we mainstream that technology and inclusion within the day-to-day operations of the city? As far as I'm concerned, I'm Hitesh Vaidya, director of urban affairs. Our main mandate is to bridge the gap between the practice and the policy.

Create the enabling frameworks that can result in creating impacts on the ground. And that's what we are working on. The way we support our cities is a five-tier approach. How we can provide the tools to the cities. They can start working on these issues on their own, rather than depending on think tank.

Technology's a loose term. Working with that framework, what do we mean by technology? Are we talking about hardware, software or talking about doing things much easier? How do we build city with data governance, rather than data governance driven data.

That's how we're looking at technology support on that. Currently, we're looking at this on, you know, with the global experiences of G3ict and other partner organizations, can we get some kind of standards, some kind of templates, some kind of frameworks? Which our cities in India can really play with and adopt with.

It has to be contextualized within the Indian system. If you have frameworks in place that our cities can start using as a technology and inclusion, which starts getting into a drawing board of the cities. That's the area we need to look.

Fourth, which is a big difficulty is when we are moving towards expansion of organization, we're also talking about the different institutions which are required at a city level to govern this new way of doing cities, new urbanization. Rural urban migration and rural urbanization. We need different types of skillsets, different types of functionalities.

In all my studies, I'll tell you, inclusion was just another lens. It wasn't a main lens. When we're looking at cities now, inclusion becomes a very, very strong lens to look at it.

But you need a skillset at a local level. Local level that might change that, I need to have different types of training, different type of skills, different type of knowledge and that's what we will look forward from G3ict and partner organization if they can recruit a national think tank that can create capacity on those issues, will be the area where we'll be looking forward for the support from you.

And last, because of your constituency's much larger than mine. Mine is 4,000 bodies, your constituency is a whole world all together. You have, for your mandate, you've got huge best practices, a repository and it's this repository of best practices [frozen]. I think these are the areas where I -- we will be interested to move

forward and make sure that the cities that are benefiting, as we call it last mile of connectivity, towards technology and inclusion and we have made a lot of commitments.

We have COP26, climate, the time has come changing commitments to action. Changing knowledge to application. That's the two areas we'd look forward with the G3ict, if we can bring that knowledge, those commitments into actionable frameworks and start talking about you know, how do we really action these ICT tools or services within the framework of Indian, local bodies context.

So, that's the area where I think this, this webinar should have an outcome. Where this like, you know, the cities which my constituency, how do they benefit? I'm a platform where I hear their voice and their voice is always that, you know, don't give me your knowledge, tell me how to do it. What to do it, has to move to how to do it. That's where we have to support our cities.

We are going to talking about procurement solutions. There are always, there are a lot of procurement solutions, you know, within the Indian guidelines. How to make them more-effective? What type of ICT tools can we use to make inclusion effective, mainstreaming inclusion within the process, and how that procurement solutions or services can be done in such a way that cities think that whatever they're doing is always accessible and meets those criterias or those benchmarks which accessibility issues, accessible -- I mean, people with accessibility would like to do that.

For that, you know, I think we need to not only look at procurement from just a part of that area, procuring hardware and software. I think, even, ICT, when we look at it's, has to even make a playground, there are different types of policies, different types of rules and languages that are available.

Even a digital tool, we can tell it, if you're doing a procurement of technology, these are the policies, these are the things. If you're doing a procurement of services, they've got availability.

Even that starting point from that, I'm not talking about big change, but I think incremental change will be the area to really look forward and we can facilitate cities and states. Whatever we are doing, has those rules and they're moving forward with both social as well as economical and political consideration, taken into place, while they're using ICT for their mainstream inclusion.

With that, I know there are a lot of experts who will talk about ICT and inclusion and I will not come in between the knowledge giver and the knowledge seeker.

So, I'll stop there and I look forward that this first webinar leads to a big change and we can come up with some kind of demonstrative tools which have a capacity to skill up and cities start getting benefit out of it. Cities should see a value in what we're talking about.

So, let's, let's walk the talk and take it to an actionable agenda. That's where I'll stop here and thank you, again, once again, G3ict, for collaborating with IUA. We really value this partnership and really value the knowledge which you provide and the global best practices you will bring on the table.

Which, as my mandate to serve my constituency, if I could be more effective and more efficient using these tools, I'll be more than happy to work with any support that can be provided to walk the talk on that also. With that, thank you very much.

>> James: Wonderful, thank you, Hitesh. One of the reasons we value our partnership with you is because of bringing it down from tools and resources and strategies, good practices that have impact. We value your leadership in this partnership and very much, in line with that, our next speaker, I think, has also led an effort to do exactly that. To develop some actionable strategies and some real world useful tools for cities to adopt immediately.

So, we're thrilled to be partnering with the World Economic Forum and the G20 Smart City Alliance as well.

>> Rushi: We're happy to be part of this initiative. I'll share a few slides. We're part of the G20 global sponsors alliance. If we just go on here -- the purpose of this alliance is to help all cities around the world, frankly, develop those kind of guidelines, tools, policies and implementable practice that's will help you to become smarter and ethical and sustainable at the same time.

That's our, kind of, starting point. We want to make sure the policy guidance we put forward is very practical, you know, just like you just said, Hitesh, that's the key here.

We started by building a policy roadmap comprised of model policies and five key areas. I deliberately put inclusivity in the first box here. From our point of view, that was the place to start.

When we thought about what policy to work on first, we deliberately started with accessibility as part of that inclusivity realm. It's only partnering together that we can do this work. We're happy to kind of provide a forum for that.

So, that brings us to the model policy you'll be learning about today, I'm thrilled that's going to happen.

That policy, along with four others, were put in front of cities from around the world. And which you can see here. We gathered data from all of those on the state of play.

So, I just wanted to, in the time I have here, show you some of those results. It's instructive in terms of, when you're thinking about your city and where the world is today and the agency of this.

Most cities don't have a written policy in this space. A lot of them do. Most cities haven't implemented the policy and the implementation, having a written policy, not the same thing.

Most cities don't have resources dedicated to this. If you look at the last chart, most cities don't know whether they actually want this policy. That's because, frankly, they don't understand it.

And you know, when we did this research, it was quite clear. That's why this webinar is so important and this kind of activity is so important to actually get the word out so that not just the leading cities in the world like New York or London are doing this.

But all of the vast majority of cities where people actually live, are benefiting from a policy like this, because it's so critical to inclusivity.

That's why this kind of outreach is super important and the final thing I'll say here is that, knowledge is one thing, but as we just heard implementations where it gets really critical and that's why we're really happy that Microsoft and other partners are playing such an important role in supporting this kind of effort.

We're trying to build a network in India that'll be taking this policy and others forward. If you want to be part of that network, just reach out to me or Shefali on the e-mail address you see here.

I encourage you to be part of the initiative that James and others are leading on the inclusive procurement launchpad which will give you support to implement the model policy they developed.

I covered quite a lot of ground there. Hopefully it's all been clear and James, I'll hand it back to you with just huge thanks from the forum, its partners and on behalf of all the cities we work with.

>> James: Absolutely, thank you so much, Rushi. I can't emphasize enough, how important it is to a nonprofit organization, Civil Society organization, like ours, to be partnering with the World Economic Forum and G20 Smart City Alliance on these issues of inclusion and equity in these cities.

Rushi, your leadership and the forum's leadership in making sure one of the first model policies is focused specifically on how cities are using technology to be inclusive of people with disabilities.

Which we'll be getting into in just a moment. We really value that partnership. And then, next, one of the ways that G3ict, our organization, has, I think, has impact around the world, wherever we work, we really do work in every region of the world, including India, we always like to work with, with the government, with disability organizations, and Civil Society organizations in industry together.

In this, in this space of inclusion and smart cities, the technology vendors, industry, often really do have these solutions to inclusion.

So, for that reason, and many others, we're really thrilled that Microsoft has been a long-standing partner and supporter for our work with cities, including this work with the World Economic Forum and with that, Shalina, would you like to make some remarks?

>> Shalina: Sure. Thank you to all the speakers that spoke before me. Microsoft is honored to provide funding and expertise to support the work that is being done in the Inclusive Procurement Launchpad project. We're committed to reducing the digital divide for people with disabilities in areas such as education, employment, access to technology.

As cities find new ways to transform their services with digital technologies and charting accessibility and inclusive solutions, it's more important than ever, now, to close the persistent digital divide that exists.

Microsoft supports, strongly supports adding accessibility criteria to procurement policies as an effective inclusion strategy that all cities can adopt.

So, in 2015, we joined the international group of accessibility leaders in signing G3ict cities worldwide to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities by demanding that only accessible technology be procured from the suppliers.

Since then, we've partnered with G3ict in developing tools and strategies to help countries, states, cities, globally learn about the opportunity that they have to leverage procurement policy in a way that increases inclusion for people with disabilities.

So, coming to India now, an estimate around 2.2% of the population, in December 2015, the Prime Minister of India launched the accessibility India campaign. For making the whole country accessibility with disabilities. Build-up of our transportation systems and information and communication ecosystems.

To this effect, the right of persons with disabilities was also introduced which makes inclusivity mandatory. Everything that a citizen needs to interact with.

So, smart city notion makes things fully accessible. The second is the mission also aims to ensure accessibility of all IT systems. Right from a disabled person being able to read price tags, being able to enter conference halls easily or government offices easily, how they participated in events.

Understanding time tables, ensuring that all government websites, mobile apps, documents are developed in a way that people with disabilities can also access them.

It also says that all citizens, including people with disabilities should be involved in development of policies and plans.

So, how does this fit in the larger picture? We're saying that accessibility, cities are able to evaluate whether technology they intend to purchase supports features like, for example, keyboard support for people who are blind or have limited availability to navigate content.

And people who are deaf or hard of hearing, their ability to see, for example, software alerts, instead of hearing them.

Then, during the pandemic, cities that invested in accessible technology improved access of all of their citizens to life-saving information and city services. The accessible technology also made it easier for city employees who had disabilities to work better and communicate with others better.

Taking all these considerations into account, the procurement stage, itself, can help citizens with disabilities to avail city services and participate in city decisions.

And second, it enables city employees who have disabilities, it gives them opportunities to succeed better, which results in an overall-improved inclusivity. Microsoft is honored and delighted to be part of this program. That's all for me. Over to you, James.

>> James: Thank you so much, Shalina. Thank you for Microsoft's partnership and support in the work we do around the world, but most-especially, there in India on projects like what we're starting to discuss today.

And thank you all, for really starting to get us even more-deeply into the core topic today, which is around how governments and how cities, in particular, can use their enormous purchasing power, their budgets and their procurement process to make sure that all of the

technology that they're buying and deploying and using is accessible to people with disabilities.

We'll get deeper and deeper into this topic, including some programs that we have available to help cities with this.

With that, I'd like to move to our next speaker, Naim, would you like to jump in?

>> Naim: I'm Program Director for this program called CITIIS. It's a program that is funding urban infrastructure development across cities in India. It's funded through a loan from the French Development Agency and technical assistance grant from European Union. We're helping them, basically, a lot of our work is around procurement. How to actually procure for everything. I mean, when we look at procurement, it covers quite a vast ground.

So, when I look at, particularly, India and look at the sector that we confirmed, the urban sector, how procurement actually happens. So, make any technology project, let's say if it's a smart cities mission, integrated command and control centers, for example or any other open space project.

Typically, they'll develop a baseline report, and based on data or DPR, data project report. A data project report will always have quantities. I'm pretty sure the panelists understand all this very well.

The bill of quantities decides how the procurement is supposed to happen. And often, when you start looking at accessibility, you don't find (?). This is very boring, technical stuff, but it's very important. The SOR, schedule of rates.

Every state comment has a schedule that says if you want to build a road for this length, this is the cost of cement, this is the cost of brick, this is the cost of this.

Your cost is already set. It's very difficult for any city government to actually innovate beyond that. The SOR.

Now, for example, we are working in a city that was supposed to really help the city. We tried to do something called Building As A Learning Aid. When you enter, when the kids enter the classroom, the door opens and just at the door, there's actually a protractor.

While the kids are playing with the door, they actually learn if it's 90 degrees, 60 degrees, it's 20 degrees, so they learn.

While they're claiming the stairs, they learn to -- they actually learn mathematics.

So, every single aspect of the building is teaching you something or the other. Even the railings has beads, so when kids are sitting idle, they play with the beads and learn their numbers.

There are multiple ways children can learn. We said "this is fantastic, let's try to do this" and make sure the structure is accessible.

The biggest problem came in, for everything you want to do here, most of the items are not (?) of rates. How do we innovate? What do we do? Any well-meaning government officials, they're like "okay, help us out." There are ways of how to do that.

There is something called unscheduled items, which are not part of SOR and that are experts who does the calculations and say, okay, based on the past prices and based on the nearest item and whatever, this unscheduled item, can be procured.

And this could be the rate. But that is like a lengthy process of first asserting the right price, then, getting approvals.

Even then, there is always this, I'd say, probability that someone might question it. So, that kind of hinders a lot of innovation that I see and what we're talking about today, as well, on how purchasing power can make everything inclusive.

Sometimes, the issues I've highlighted are genuine, and sometimes, when you can make a difference to use them as a very lazy excuse not to do things.

For example, we did find solutions. We found out that [frozen]. And then go to the state government, get it approved. We got things approved, now Brevity [phonetic] is developing 24 schools across 24 religions -- around that area, building as a learning aid model.

And ensuring, where possible, there's accessibility. And doing so, increased some costs and we said that can easily be managed. Instead of 24 schools, you build 20 schools, but at least those 20 schools need to have the accessibility standards.

They need to have this innovative model on procurement. So, this is a very broad understanding in terms of how cities develop and procure. I think we need to really focus on these two things on DPRs and the POQs and SORs in terms of you know, very technical terms, but that is where I think that boring part is where the innovation really, the reforms really lie.

That's what my experience of working with the cities has been. So, we need to actually start and that, that work can only happen by working in the state governments.

We need to catch various state governments. Even if community does something, it's very difficult to let it down to the local level. If state governments do it, it's much easier. Cities are a state subject in India. They're not on the list.

That's something we have to keep in mind. Most advocacy is centered at the national level. We need to focus a lot more of our energies at the state level as well. For bringing out a lot of this meaningful change.

There are other examples, there are 12 cities under my CITIIS program and we're launching 15 to 18 cities. Those are -- we are, again, looking at them as well. And coming by the end of this year. We have a group working with us.

An important thing we've done, thanks to the team, we've developed procurement guidelines for these 12 cities, at least, making them, maybe, this small island of excellence, so as to say, to say that if -- whatever you procure, you have to procure in a certain manner, which is, which makes sure that the accessibility part is taken care of.

So, we have actually issues guidelines to all the 12 cities along with the checklist, which was again, helped us prepare that. We conducted two workshops for all those cities. One was a virtual workshop. Another was an in-person workshop.

So, that's it. For my side. Thanks, thanks for inviting me. Over to James.

>> James: Thank you so much, Naim and thank you for making the really-important connection between procurement and standards and accessibility. We'll be getting much more detailed about that in this model policy from the World Economic Forum in the G20 Smart City Alliance, which focuses on that topic of how do we use procurement and standards to make sure we're buying and using accessible technology.

Our next speaker is from the smart cities mission in India, Padam, would you like to make some remarks?
>> Padam: Thank you, James. Good afternoon, good morning and good evening to all the participants joining from various time zones, including the smart cities, presented by city commissioners, CEOs and other officials. Greetings to all my fellow panelists also.

My name is Padam Vijay, I'm a technical advisor and have been associated with the smart city mission for five years. I've been part of many programs that have a set of planning and execution. Because of the passage of time, I'd keep my, my topic very short and brief.

For a change, I'll not be talking technology today. The smart cities mission and process. So, you must be aware that the smart city mission was launched in 2015, which covered 100 smart cities across the length and breadth of the country.

These cities were selected for a robust challenge process and also a city consultation. One thing was very important in that. It had the flexivity of saying one side doesn't fit all.

The city has the flexibility to create projects which source their cities and climate and context.

Therefore, all the smart cities haven't turned out to be light house cities and we see the replication happening from the learning we have in these smart cities, going to all the cities. Almost 4,000 +.

This mission had four key principles of achieving more from affordable excellence, build something for two days, that's fine, but make sure it's built for future as well and improve on the most-important part, the key objective today. Include all.

I think this is the key message that came out in the market when the smart cities mission was launched and what is the purpose to ensure quality of life of the people through economic growth are, you know, achieved locally and get developed.

Especially those technologies which leads to smart outcomes. Smart outcomes is always a subjective thing. It's about detailing, it's not about just creating some technology and a name.

I think the smart cities mission, we tried to demystify much details. If you see the work that's gone into smart cities, especially the technology space, has been, has been such that they became board room in the case of COVID pandemic, you know, when you look at data.

And we have been very, very fortunate that these centers have become a life saver for many of our cities.

I'll say, we've listed that out. Technology is enabled, definitely, but if it is not with the right kind of standards, processes, policies, it can do wonders.

This is what we're talking today. Really asking about accessibility or inclusivity, we call it. It's for everybody. The city is for everybody. How do we ensure it's very difficult to say that, okay, I'll do this and it is ensured.

It's not. Technology binds every effort we make in that city and it's a part of technology that we bring in. Naim talked about the processes that, all the procurement guidelines that came out. What to do rather than what we can do. I think the time has come to get into a

state that, how do we ensure that every city in the country is part of one large community.

Smart cities are developing places. Some of the places that Shalina has spoken about, they are looking at developing those places and people love to live. It's not just about living. They should love to live there, love to work and play there. If that's the kind of spaces we build, it's more of a place that we can really implement.

What do we mean with people? People doesn't mean men or women or kids. It is every single person. Whether it is man, women, child, senior citizens, and differently-abled people. The work we do in the technology or non-technology space, I think it should be meant for all people. Let's not leave anybody behind us. Let everybody come together.

Last six years, we've done a lot of work in this area. Non-digital. We've been able to bring those features, which is one of our smart cities. You'll be glad to know they've created a website that is best accessible to the public.

I mean, it had all those things to make sure it was made for everybody. On 3rd of December, they launched a very interesting mobile app that said -- it actually means you're going to go to survey every single house, find out what is the, build up the people that live there and do they have a person with disability? Build the database of those people. Create a program around it and try to get them into the ministry.

I think this is some of the phenomenal effort, I'd say, somebody thought about it, what are the most-simplistic initiatives that anybody can take? Get a database of how many people are in that city and how do we serve them?

The moment we know people live in a city or populations come in the city, we know what permissions are required. Whenever we talk about that, most of the people we talk about, when you say you, disabled-friendly, everybody say "okay, it's a website." You make a website, people should be able to access that website.

Most of the time, this isn't normal and we need to demonstrate this understanding that it's not about the website. It's about every single piece of system that has an IP address. If I can call it technology. If you can make sure that these systems are user-friendly, easy-access systems and it doesn't differentiate between Mahesh and Ramesh, Mona and Sona, A and B. That's the way to go.

I'll give an example. Delivering very interesting place. Somebody has created that thought in the mind, let's make a place which can be accessed by everybody. This has actually gone -- you'll be glad

to know that the 2020 globalist market, if you have an intent to do certain things, there are people who recognize your efforts. There are people who acknowledge your efforts and also design, the part of design was done such that anyone having an impairment, blind, handicap, they were given access as a result and that was a privilege for somebody to look of.

One of our smart cities, IT system was implemented. It empowers citizens in terms of disability as well as even, those people with changing ability.

What kind of difficulty they had in managing an excessive system. Hiring those people to be part of the main mission, by delivering certain services. Services that should be receiving -- they should be on the receiving side and they also have the services. Can the job be developed for them? What kind of comfort we build around that?

What kind of baselining that we should do so they are, they, immediately catch up with that effort, that work, rather than putting another effort to make that happen.

We'll make sure -- I'll try to sum it up. There are so many examples to make sure what has been built has been built to help all the people.

I think, when we conceived our technology implementation in smart cities, we were thinking how do we bring some core prospect into our programs? We released an advisory from the mission side, especially for IT system access and that advisory, you would believe that point was almost 2.5 years. The focus was, how do we bring accessibility into a design? And they change, if the design is faulty, if the design hasn't been -- aspect hasn't been considered in the design, I feel that we have already lost it.

Naim has talking about this. The design, itself is not favorable. We should, we should make an attempt to see that every single rung is stitched well together. It converges with each other. It leverages each other and try to build a whole change that can develop the research.

We have created cities to build portals that are user-friendly mobile app. Even in internal application systems.

For the designing the RFPs and even for the new program processes, we have given them the clear guidelines that they should follow. To improve those coefficients which are favorable to the differently-abled people.

Now, there could be people with cognitive difficulties. How do you bring assistive technology for that? How do you -- what kind of

technology is absolutely right for them? Can we implement it?
Implementation also is not enough.

How do we bring those technologies at much lower cost? How do you
create a skill of that? How do you replicate that? We're all talking
about silos. It doesn't scale up.

And the precise reason is that, we are not seeing the last
picture, we're seeing, more as it comes to us, rather than -- I think
design is one of the very important aspects. If is very
well-understood through processes, through standard practice, I think
these are something very, very important, small things, but will have a
big impact.

I think we should definitely looking at, very aggressively, that
design stage, itself is absolutely (?) for any cities to take. It's
like building a foundation.

It's our first time being right. For system, if it is right,
it'll travel 2,000 miles. We talked about how people are able to
distinguish contents by using different colors. All those have been
provisioned and suggested to cities to take it.

Government can do something, government can't do everything. They
need people around the ecosystem to support the government in achieving
the purpose that has been designed and it has been designed not in the
city of the government, generally consultations and a large ecosystem
in confidence in coming up with this.

I believe that a lot of things have been done at the policy or the
guideline level. Time is to implement the crowd, walking the talk. I
like the word, walking the talk. And I believe that we are, we are in
such a right place right now, G3ict, I have this -- we have a forum
there. We have Microsoft, approval data in the technology space. And
the biggest development in India.

We cannot ask for any better combination of the stakeholder, which
can drive this initiative, which is also in, always in our mind. We
should help every single citizen around us. Irrespective of abled or
disabled.

I'd like to conclude with one final statement. That we need to
make sure that whatever we do today is cross-learned, experiences are
shared. We build a test case, we build a light house of test cases for
this kind of system. Which can be propagated, replicated with certain
skills. Thank you for inviting me to be part of this session. Thank
you.

>> James: Thank you, Padam. A lot of us were interested to watch and see how you'd succeed and if there'd be a focus on inclusion and accessibility. We've been really happy to see there has been.

It's good to hear you provide a couple real examples of cities and the websites and the mobile apps that they're creating that are inclusive of people with disabilities.

But also, your statement that, as we think about inclusion in smart cities, in accessibility of technology, we need to think beyond websites, to other systems as well. We really appreciate your remarks and your partnership.

With that, the next speaker is from our partner at NIUA, Utsav, would you like to make some remarks?
>> Utsav: Thank you, everyone. I'll borrow some of the things that our director, Padam and Naim have named before.

How to put together technical assistance program, much like the program I represent. It will help unbundle the problems that we're currently dealing with, a program of standards and guidelines, not translating equally well into practice or implementation, the well-being of the larger community, including persons with disabilities.

I do have a small slide show. Let me know if you can see. All right, society program I represent is called Building Accessible Safe and Inclusive Indian Cities. We are looking forward to working with cities and promoting universal accessibility and inclusion. And our focus always has been in the build form, but we're looking at other areas where cities do find universal accessibility to a difficult component to independent great.

Our theory of change is quite simple. We've been working with cities the past two to three years. We understand there are four or five elements of interest. Before you can bring change on the ground, first of all, most of which is a legislative framework.

Frameworks and guidelines they're referring to. Then comes the institutional mechanisms and government systems that they are implementing at local level. Next is to look at their skillsets, which is capacity-building and training and whether they have an existing baseline effort through pilots and demonstrated projects that they have implemented with regards to universal accessibility and inclusion.

And last of that would be monitoring and evaluation. Which is something which is cross-cutting [frozen]. And has to be something which is across all sectors. Whether we're talking about housing, education, healthcare, disaster, or even recreational spaces.

Whatever you talk about in universal accessibility has to be an underpinning in that. That's what we're trying to work with the cities to do.

Now, what, what has benefitted a lot in the past ten, fifteen years is the transformation that India has made in terms of this approach. We're no longer looking at cities or no longer looking at persons with disabilities from a social and medical approach.

We've starting a more progressive approach in terms of rights. The rights of persons with disabilities, those have substantially strengthened the ask in terms of what persons with disabilities can ask from the cities.

And what we have understood is that as a sort of, showing, universal accessibility and inclusion has to be a 360-degree approach. It cannot be siloed as has been the word of the day. There are many islands of excellence. We need to connect them and ensure they are talking to each other and are moving on with the work that's been done.

Now, Naim mentioned during his presentation, the work we've collaborated upon is to work with the cities, and how do you ensure that inclusion is adopted through integration in the procurement process?

Now, he touched upon some of the stages that the cities go through, to do a feasibility study, put together design, tendering procurement, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, eventually learning through it.

So, what we've done for them, we developed a very easy checklist that can easily tell you what to do and what not to do. At different stages of the project cycle and eventually, but the point we are trying to make, while you adapt and implement them, in order to ensure that at the end of it, you're able to evaluate yourselves and say whether you're objectively better using the toolkit and are you objectively better in terms of universal standards and inclusion standards in the city after you've completed the cycle.

Now, nothing would be possible without an integration. We've been talking about that. When we are implementing projects at a local level, at a city level, we need to ensure it is sort of layered away where the national policies, the state guidelines and local bylaws all speak to each other.

They speak to each other across all sectors, whether we talk about health, transport, housing or education.

Now, a question that has been put together or put forward by our previous speakers is how we do it. There's a lot of knowledge that we

have practices put together. Cities find it difficult to answer "how do I do it?" In easy words, for universal accessibility, making sure what we're asking for, whether in the distribution of rates or availability quantities, once it becomes accessible, over a period of time, once you've done it enough times, you know it will become affordable by items of scale.

Once that's done, you'll find acceptability across different sectors and stakeholders.

The case of point in that, the proof in the pudding, it's easy to say "this is what the roadmap should look like." Our experience working with a city like Varanasi, the intervention with Varanasi has showed us that with effort and the right kind of data, a lot can be done. And a lot has been done in the city over the last three years, including parking facilitates that are inherently inclusive, redevelopment of labor fronts to make it more accessible. Building convention centers that are state-of-the-art in terms of technology and building schools as well, that, that cater to the needs of children with disabilities.

We've seen projects and pipeline projects executed that are in the ballpark of over $2 billion. There are plenty of opportunities to harness, if you work with a city in the right way.

Our technical assistance program has been focusing on a variety of projects. We're looking at projects that are going projects that are in the pipeline and projects that have already been executed.

We're not sector agnostic, so we're looking for different sectors to work with.

The project has been audible to put together a lot of information, a lot of knowledge projects, including the one that Naim was referring to. We've been able to work with the national government in revising the standards and guidelines for planning and build environment. All of that is readily available at our website which is www.niua.org. For more project details, you can write to us at thebasiicproject.niua.

>> James: This really does align with the work we're doing with our partners around the world as well. Thank you for sharing those examples.

So, with that, what we'd like to do now, Monica, if you want to pull up our slide deck. We want to -- we've talked a lot about procurement and inclusion and accessibility and technology, now we want to pull all of that together around an opportunity for cities in India and around the world to understand about the model policy for accessibility, inclusive procurement that's been developed under the World Economic Forum and the G20 Smart City Alliance.

I've got a couple colleagues here, Monica, if you want to go to today's discussion slide -- I think it's the fourth slide. Yeah, right there.

So, I've got a couple colleagues here that will walk us all through, together, the model policy and why it's important. We'll go through the main components of this policy, it's also available on the World Economic Forum website. And you can see the language there.

We're actually using this policy, working with cities to adopt the policy now. And so, we're very happy to be able to share some detail about the policy with cities there in India.

We'll talk about next steps and then try to leave some time at the end for discussion and questions, including, I see there, are some questions in the Q&A. We may touch on some of those during the presentation. If not, we'll definitely try to answer them either in the Q&A section or at the very end of the session.

So, I'm really happy to have my partners here introduce themselves to you. You've heard from me and Bela, from G3ict.

So, let me ask my other two partners to introduce themselves. Monica, would you like to introduce yourself?
>> Monica: Yes, thank you, James. Good evening to everyone. I've been working for James for many years now. I'm based in Mexico and have been working for the past ten to eleven years, almost, creating our network on digital accessibilities. The idea of what we do is to present to governments, to companies, the understanding of the barriers that not only persons with disabilities, but normally vulnerable groups that are excluded from these digital transformations, the elderly, the indigenous people.

So, the idea is for us to explain the barriers and to have a general understanding of what digital inclusion must be and also to help implement policies and projects and programs in order to minimize these bridges. It's a pleasure to be here with you.

>> James: We'll hear more from Monica in a moment. Subhash, would you like to introduce yourself?
>> Subhash: Thank you, James. I'm community director for accessibility focusing primarily on built environment and virtual environments. I've been involved in the standardization process as part of the Bureau of National Standards and building code.

>> James: Thank you, Subhash. It's exciting news for this work that India and BIS have taken the leadership to notify a new ICT, accessibility standard, that's based on existing standards. We'll talk about that in a minute.

So, Monica and Subhash are the kinds of partners that G3ict works with around the world every day. They're leaders in Mexico, India and worldwide.

We mentioned that what we're going to talk about today with this model policy, Monica, if you want to just skip ahead to -- a couple slides. You can click through this one. This is part of a partnership with the World Economic Forum. Where we worked with the forum for quite awhile to develop this model policy with a group of exerts.

Again, the model policy is on their website. You can read it right now. And now, we're working with partners including NIUA, they're in India, to help cities around the world to use the model policy, to adopt it.

We want to talk about why that's so important. So, just to be clear, what we're talking about here is this model policy is for how cities buy technology. So, it focuses on making sure that cities are able to purchase technology that is accessible for people with disabilities.

And as we heard, there's more than 15% of the global population as a person with a disability, more than a billion people worldwide.

So, the requirement, if you want to go back to that previous slide, thanks. The requirement is not on the technology, makers, vendors, the requirement is on the government, itself. Where they say we're making a commitment that when we buy technology, it will be accessible technology.

And importantly, what we mean by accessible is defined by these international or global accessible standards in the great position that India is in.

You're already well-into the process of adopting those global standards as an India national standard. You have an idea what that means. Thanks to Microsoft and Subhash and other experts in the area.

The other good news is that this kind of policy is built on experience of decades in countries around the world. Governments like the U.S. federal government, the governments across the European Union, are all using this kind of policy.

What we've done with the G20, smart city alliance is to Taylor the policy to cities so they can use this to make sure their technology procurements and all of their technology systems that they're deploying are useable by people with a range of disabilities.

We know, today, the world isn't accessible. Five or six years ago, we launched a global smart cities project with a global study that found today, smart cities, cities that are using technology are

actually making the digital divide worse, not better, for people with disabilities. We have a lot of work to do to make sure the range of technology deployments in cities are accessible.

We focus on the model policy and procurement approach to inclusion because we know these policies work. We've seen them work in governments around the world. When governments put into their RFPs or tenders, the requirement for accessibility, it actually does help to make sure that government services are more accessible to people with disabilities.

It helps to make sure that government systems are accessible to their own employees. Many governments -- every government has employees with disabilities. So, it's important for your employees as well that a technology a city is buying and using is accessible.

We've seen governments that implement these kinds of policies tend to become some of the best employers of people with disabilities in the world. The best employer of people with disabilities in the world is the U.S. federal government. And they've had a policy like this for more than 20 years. It helps to support and grow the tech sector and develop an ecosystem of technology professionals that understand accessibility, innovation and inclusion and in India, this is a growing sector.

Monica and Subhash, anything we should focus on for procurement before we go onto the disability slide?
>> Subhash: The entire accessibility regime in the country is focusing on the rights of persons with disabilities act. It's not vendor-specific. It has to be from the government. Cities need to have procurement policies.

>> Monica: Through all the innovation that companies have done, regarding disability, when the U.S. and Europe started including accessibility requirements in their procurement policies, really, the companies made a big effort. Everybody wants to sell to the government.

You really create an ecosystem, you really create a market for inclusive and digital products.

Finally, I'd like to ask that part of the day-to-day products that we are already buying are accessible. That's why it's important to have a procurement policy and also for government officials to understand what accessibility is, so they know when they're buying accessible products.

>> James: Thank you. Monica, if you could skip ahead to the disability and outcomes slide.

>> Padam: One point from my side. The smart city mission already believes the model documents for procurement, which is available online. I can put the link out here. Stakeholders can also refer to that. It's a very exhaustive document. It has one of the excellent guidelines as part of it.

>> James: Thank you so much for that. So, Monica, if you go ahead -- right there is good. What we're talking about in this procurement policy is cities buying technology that does work for everyone.

Including people with a range of disabilities, whether visual disabilities, auditory, hearing disabilities, mobility disabilities. Cognitive and intellectual disabilities.

What's great about the standard that Subhash mentioned that India is adopting. It defines what accessibility means for every kind of technology and all of these disabilities, as best can be defined today.

Why we do so much work with partners in this area, we know the 1 billion people with disabilities around the world have worse outcomes than the rest of the population as a whole.

People with disabilities are less-likely to start school, less-likely to finish school, less-likely to be employed. More-likely to be living in poverty. They experience an extreme digital divide. All of this is fact. And it's in every country of the world. It doesn't matter where it is. The global north or global south.

These types of procurement policies, making sure the government buys and deploys technology to support its services really do help to impact these outcomes and improve these outcomes for people with disabilities.

Subhash, before we go on, anything you'd like to add there?

>> Subhash: No, I think, move forward.

>> James: The accessibility slide. What we're talking about, as we're discussing a model policy to help make sure governments are buying technology that's accessible, what we mean by that, the extent to which a product or service can be used by a person with a disability as effectively as a person without a disability.

And accessible products, systems, services, environments and facilities can be used by people with the widest range of characteristics and capabilities to achieve a specific goal or for use.

These are definitions that come out of the UN system and they're embedded as part of the model policy we'll talk about in a second. Next slide.

We know that accessibility matters in cities and we have heard a little about this already by some of the previous speakers. Cities today, around the world, are buying technology and deploying technology to support the broad range of services they provide.

We know that cities provide critical services every day to the communities. So, they're deploying mobile solutions and web solutions around transportation planning, to good the from one part of the city to the next, you can use technology to do that.

I heard the primary way to get support for housing in that city, if you are low-income person, was through a city website. But they weren't sure if that city website was accessible.

And that's critically important, that service from the city. We've heard similar social service programs being deployed through technology around the world, that are not accessible.

You may have heard in Australia, for example, the, initially the website you used to sign up get your COVID vaccine wasn't accessible for people with disabilities. That doesn't have to be the case.

With these standards, with procurement policies, you can make sure that the services your city is providing, that are, that are critical to people, are also accessible for people with disabilities.

And this extends to digital payments for fees and fines, to different ways of engaging citizens to get their perspective. We want to make sure everyone is included in that. Increasingly, courts are using technology to support their services.

So, accessibility is critical in courts and justice systems. Museums as well, are increasingly undergoing a digital transformation.

If you think of any of the services that your city provides that are supported or delivered through technology, we want to make sure those are accessible.

Monica, would you like though add anything here?

>> Monica: With digital transformation, every day we see more important services offered online. We know the way to scale and reach more citizens, and that's why it's critical to make them accessible.

And I'll only add from the beginning. Many times, what we're seeing, you already have a service and you're patching it and enhancing it and trying to make it accessible afterwards and it's more expensive.

So, the recommendation with the model policy is to have them accessible from the beginning. Thanks.

>> James: Would you like to add anything, Subhash.

>> Subhash: In India, we've taken up point of sales. You look at the metro card and when you punch it, the money is deducted. The person who is a user doesn't know how much money is deducted. It actually creates dependence on others, rather than independence. That's why it actually matters in smart cities that in mobility and other services, we do include accessibility from day one.

There are major cities in India right now looking at buying mobility devices and mobility, I'd say, passes, so, we have had this issue, we'd be -- the group also, the disability groups also challenged it, that we don't want the practices which are inaccessible.

So, there's a very, you know, already, these things are creating problems for people and they're well aware. So, we need to address these. It's really important for inclusion.

>> James: Thank you for, that Subhash and it also reminds me to make the point that we sort of heard a bit earlier from some of speakers as well. When you design something to be inclusive and accessible, it works better for everyone in your city.

Whatever the service is. That's another way to think of the benefits of making sure you're buying accessible technology, that it will really benefit all your communities in each of your cities.

Monica, if you'd like to go to the model policy slide. You can skip through these blue slides. Okay, great. The good news is that we have, today, a model policy for procurement that cities can adopt and use to make sure that their investments in technology are an accessible technology.

As mentioned, this model policy is based on decades of existing good practices and policies by other governments in the U.S., Europe, Australia, other governments around the world are making progress in adopting these kinds of policies as well, because they work.

What we did in partnership with the World Economic Forum and other experts around the world is create a pretty brief, I think, it's pretty straightforward, model policy that has these 12 or 14 different sections to it.

Again, they're all available online and what you have in the policy, we'll talk through them really briefly is a set of definitions and Monica, if you can show the definitions slide. We pull out international definitions of accessibility, assistive technology, accessible technology, so there's a set of definitions that you can use in your model policy.

If you go back to the slide on the policy, Monica. There's an introduction that, that sort of ties this model policy to other important objectives you may have in your city for inclusion.

There's a set of objectives specific to procurement and inclusion. Importantly, there's a section on roles and responsibilities, so, as your city adopts this model policy, who is sort, in charge?

Monica and I are working with the city of Los Angeles right now in adopting this policy and what they've decided, we think is that they have a procurement department and chief procurement officer, they will be named as, as the responsible party in the city of Los Angeles, most-likely.

There's a section on defining accessibility and this is really important, it goes to Subhash, what you were saying in the great advantage that you have in India now.

In section four, we -- the policy points to a global standard that defines what accessible means. And there's three that we mentioned in the appendix and in India, you are in the process of adopting one of those international standards as a national standard in India.

So, that work's already been done for you and you have that great advantage. So, Subhash, I don't know if you want to say anything more about the standard and adoption process?

>> Subhash: Yes, James. We have already done the technical adoption of (?) standard, version 3.2.1. This is part one, so, currently, the BIS team is working on part two of the business and conformance standards. Adaptions have been made for India, but these are limited, such as the Rights of Persons With Disabilities Act. The whole accessibility mandate is anchored and the official language. India has the official language, it's a huge, diverse country and we have updated that.

So, the technical coverage, if you see in this standard, is almost identical.

>> James: Thank you, Subhash. India should be in the -- BIS should be congratulated on this great advancement in adopting this very robust global standard.

Section five talks about how the city will do preparatory studies, the background research that needs to take into account, how users may use the technology. Section six talks about how the standard will be used in writing tenders.

Section seven is importantly about conformance, so, if the city is putting into its tenders that accessibility is a requirement and this Indian standard is a requirement, how do you verify your vendors are

giving you that? So, in there, we talk about processes for verifying conformance to the standard that you're requiring.

Most-typically, what we see around the world is what, what's called supplier's declaration of conformance. Where the supplier says in a, in a statement to the city, we meet any part of the standard and we're not meeting this part of the standard.

And then the section eight is on how you manage those contracts and make sure that accessibility remains a part of ongoing contracts with the suppliers and vendors.

Section nine talks about exemptions. There may be some reasons that you don't need accessibility to be a part of your technology purchases. Maybe for technology that's just sort of back end or back office technology with no human interface, may not need accessibility to be a requirement.

Importantly, section 10 talks about training and capacity-building for your city staff, your procurement officials in particular, but also your IT staff on accessibility.

Section 11 talks about how, about monitoring how well you're implementing the policy. What percent of your procurements are referencing the standard, that sort of thing.

And section 12 talks about reviewing the, the policy every couple years. I think we actually suggest two years in the policy.

And then, again, in the annex, you have a link to the three standards, but you'll have one very soon in India that's an India national standard.

It's pretty straightforward, it's leveraging good practices and procurement now that we see in IT departments. And applying those to accessibility.

So the same sorts of things that, in IT department, in a procurement department might do when buying technology and thinking about security, for example, just doing the same sort of thinking and processes about making sure that accessibility is in there, just like security is, in new technology purposes.

Let me pause there, Monica, anything you want to add about the policy and parts of the policy?

>> Monica: If I may, only to stress that it's very important and congratulations for the policy, the standard going to be national.

But very important to, to create capabilities and to have clear definitions. One example is there's a difference between assistive technology and accessible ICTs and services.

It's very important that we understand the difference. We've seen around the world, for instance, in Columbia, there was a very good project where they bought assistive technology for everyone. A screen reader for every Columbian in the country. They spent billions of dollars on this technology. People that were blind couldn't use it if the sites weren't accessibility.

That's why creating capabilities on a broader network, the different understanding of the definitions is crucial for implementation.

>> James: And these policies and the standards really are quite brought in their definition of technology, so, it's really useful. Subhash, anything you want to add about the policy?

>> Subhash: The policy has to be contextualized. It's been loosely put out, the barriers and challenges we face in the system. How do we address those barriers? In that context, we need to look at this policy.

Especially, it has to be done at various state levels. At union level, yes, we have, India is a federation of states where cities and these issues are the state, are not of the union, within the availability of the union.

So, these have to be taken up by the states. So, we need to rope in states, contextualize it, as for their environment, and see where loopholes are. So that we can fill in within that policy.

So, one simple example that I can give, typically, a system to process one DPI. If you're allowing those marks to be skipped or augment, still, it gets passed. That's something we need to fill in. So, I'll just stop there.

>> James: Thank you for, that Subhash. Monica, you can stay on this slide, that's fine. There's a question about stakeholders. Monica, you touched on this, even more-specifically, the role of users with disabilities and the importance of people with disabilities as part of the procurement process, whether it's for a city or company or any organization.

And so, built into that, that prep study, if you're, you're purchasing a technology system or developing a website, having users of all kinds, including users with disabilities, as part of that development process and procurement process and even testing after you purchase the system and start to deploy it, having users with disabilities as part of that process, it is really critical to success.

And part of the policy as well. And there's some really good practices worldwide on how you do that.

For next steps, I know we're, we're out of time, I'll stay on and try to answer some of these questions in the chat here, in a minute, but for next steps, what we're doing with Monica and Subhash and other partners around the world with NIUA is sort of evangelizing the model policy to cities around the world.

And with Microsoft support, actually, we've started a project called the Inclusive Procurement Launchpad. We're working with a team of experts from six cities around the world. The first is Los Angeles.

We're working with cities to adopt the model policy, to help them understand the details, to help them adjust the policy a little to their city.

We announced Los Angeles as the first. We're getting ready to announce the next two or three and there's still a couple open slots for this inclusive launchpad program where we'll help your city adopt the model policy.

And for cities in India that might be interested in that, we'd love to have an Indian city in this program, if that kind of technical assistance is of interest to you, certainly reach out to us or to NIUA about that or to Subhash, our country representative in India.

And I think we are out of time, so, we're -- I certainly appreciate the partnership with Monica and Subhash and all our partners from smart cities mission and Microsoft as well.

I'll answer some of the questions in chat, but we can end the webinar now. Thank you very much for attending.

>> Thank you to all the participants.

[Presentation concluded at 7:32 a.m. CT].

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